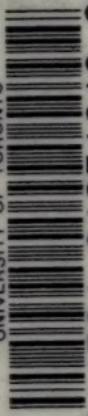


# BELGIUM

## FRANK·MACLEAN

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# B E L G I U M

BY FRANK MACLEAN

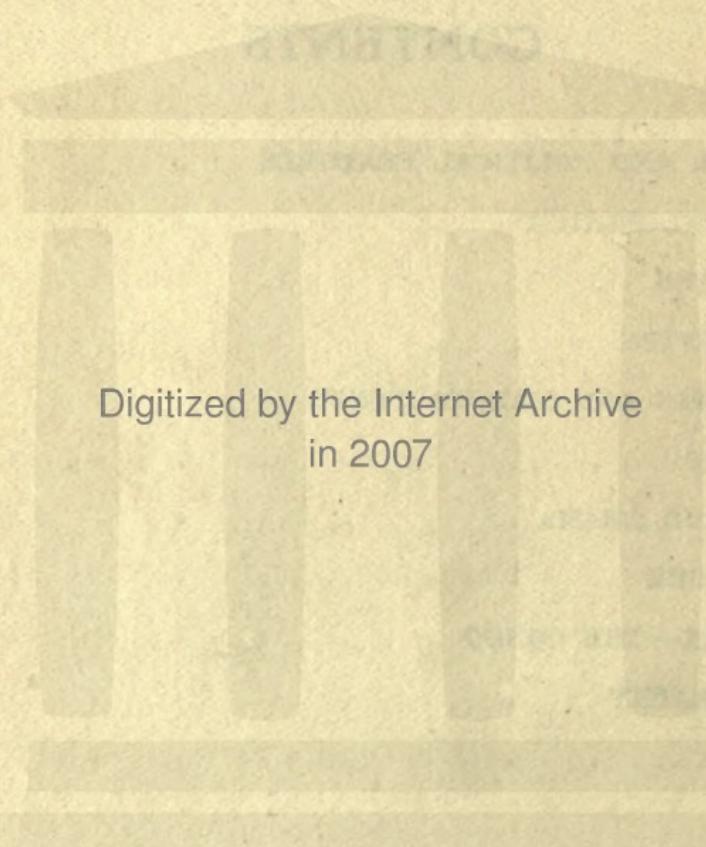


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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
PHYSICAL AND POLITICAL FEATURES . . . . .	5
HISTORICAL SKETCH . . . . .	22
THE TOWNS . . . . .	36
THE COUNTRY . . . . .	63
INDUSTRIES AND MANUFACTURES . . . . .	70
THE ARTS . . . . .	75
MUSIC AND DRAMA . . . . .	84
LITERATURE . . . . .	85
APPENDIX—THE CONGO . . . . .	90
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	94
INDEX . . . . .	95



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# BELGIUM

## PHYSICAL AND POLITICAL FEATURES

BELGIUM has been aptly described as an area of both political and geographic transition. Politically, it is a buffer state, between two great political antagonists, France and Germany, with a third potential antagonist, Holland, stretched far across its northern boundary. Geographically, it is also transitional, since its great rivers, the chief factors of its geographic importance, all rise and empty themselves beyond the Belgian frontiers. Its mineral beds, moreover, are mainly extensions from other countries, and even its surface features are hardly its own ; any more than its history and languages can be dissociated from France and Holland, Prussia, Austria and Spain. The very railway tickets are transitional, being printed in two languages, one of which is always foreign—French for the west, and German for the east.

Just as the history of Belgium is largely that of the neighbouring states, so her frontier lines take on a special significance in connection with that history.

Belgium is bounded by France on the south, by Prussia and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg on the east and south-east, by Holland on the north and north-east, and by the North Sea on the north-west. Her land frontiers measure 384 miles with France, 80 miles with Luxembourg, 60 miles with Prussia, 269 miles with Holland, and she has a coast line of 42 miles. The measure of the respective frontiers is largely that of the political and military struggles waged along them. Certainly the Franco-Belgian frontier, with its

vast superiority in length, takes precedence as the line of longest contention. The endless wars between France and Spain were almost invariably settled by the acquisition or the cession of some treasured piece of territory adjoining this frontier. In the same way the eastern and northern frontiers have their pungent historical associations. It was in the quarries of the Maestricht district that many heretical refugees from Spanish Jesuitism sought refuge, while the long Dutch frontier is more significant still, in that it recalls the determined effort of Holland to restrict the sea-coast of her neighbours to a comparatively short strip, and, above all, to retain control of the mouth of the Scheldt, the most valuable tidal outlet to the North Sea. The open sea-coast is mainly associated with the decay of two of Belgium's most noble cities, Bruges and Ypres, and the rise, at an interval of time, of two new ports—the old Nieuport and the new Zeebrugge—at the outlets of the Yser and the Bruges ship canal.

The sea-coast itself is a long, narrow strip of very gently shelving sands and sand-dunes. The shallowness of the water is some security against invasion ; but this fringe to the stretch of inland plains, which it protects partly by the natural dunes and partly by artificial dykes, has few other claims to attractiveness, and is, moreover, swept and scoured by every wind that blows. Flat meadowland forms the littoral plains, which in part are below sea-level. Thence the land tends to rise very gradually towards the Ardennes, where it attains a maximum height of 2300 feet. Between this upland plateau and the middle region comprising Brabant and Hainaut lies the coal- and iron-bearing valley of the Sambre-Meuse. One can only generalise roughly the character of these various divisions. The low-lying plains of Flanders are largely pasturage. Agricultural Flanders was originally very much like the Campine, but its cultivators have raised the underlying clay to the surface, and transformed a barren region into an extremely fertile one. At one time the whole of the Waas was a peat bog ; it was reclaimed, and is now as fertile

as any other part of Flanders. South of the plains is a tract of fine agricultural land, from 300 to 500 feet above sea-level, with a chalk ridge separating the Scheldt and Meuse basins ; farther south, again, the picturesque uplands of the Famenne and Fagnes merge in the rocky plateau of the Ardennes. The latter heights are mainly composed of metamorphic slates and quartz rocks, and in the wilder parts the soil is excessively shallow, permitting only the growth of stunted trees and shrubs. One of the highest points is the Baraque Michel, in the south-east of the province of Liége, close to the Prussian frontier. Its elevation is over 2000 feet. The whole of the province of Luxembourg is more than 500 feet above the sea. Romantic hills and dales are characteristic of the triangular district called Entre-Sambre-et-Meuse, of which the town of Namur is the north-eastern apex.

In the Campine, occupying the greater part of north-eastern Belgium, a sandy soil predominates. Yet the industry of its people has made large tracts of it productive. Clay is found there at a depth of less than a yard, and by mixing this with the sand, a soil is obtained which repays the labour of working it. Where the sand is deeper, the aspect of the country is similar to that bordering on the sea ; there are dunes, with strips of soil between their ridges, on which grow heather and thyme. The sand is reddish owing to its percolation by rain which has been charged with tannic acid derived from the heather.

There are now no lakes in Belgium, but the country is well watered by rivers. The most important of these are the Meuse and the Scheldt, which, between them, drain nearly the whole territory. Their characteristics are in one respect similar. Both take their rise in France, and at first follow a northward course, until each is joined by its principal tributary, the Meuse by the Sambre and the Scheldt by the Lys, when both bend sharply eastwards. Otherwise there is not much similarity between them. The Meuse is a river of the mountains, the Scheldt of the plains. The former

pierces the Ardennes between Mezières and Namur, and pursues its way between steep cliffs of slate and quartz rocks. The Scheldt is content to wash the bases of a few hills at Tournay, from which point its bed is only some 50 feet above sea-level. At Ghent it meets the sea tide, and thenceforward it is practically an estuary, with brackish water beyond Antwerp. The Dendre joins the Scheldt at Termonde, so that the Scheldt, Lys, and Dendre, flowing from the west and south, empty themselves by the same mouth, while from the east come the Dyle and Nethe to the same estuary. The rivers throughout the Belgian lowlands have been canalised, but the hydrography of the country is too extensive and too intricate to be examined here. One may mention, however, that in 1911 the mileage of waterways amounted to 1238.

Between the mean annual temperature of the plains of Flanders and Brabant and the Hautes Fagnes plateau of the Ardennes there is a difference of  $5^{\circ}$ , or about the same as that between the Belgian coast and Norway. In the west of Belgium the climate is similar to that met with on the English side of the Channel; whereas in eastern Belgium the summers are a little warmer and the winters more severe. Since moisture-laden winds predominate, the country is bathed almost throughout the year in an atmosphere of vapour, with frequent fogs in the winter. The annual rainfall amounts to about 30 inches in the west; east of the Meuse it increases with the elevation above the sea-level.

In general it may be said that the racial divisions in Belgium correspond to the physical divisions. Since the dawn of history there have been two distinct groups of people on Flemish soil: Flemings and Walloons. The former are mainly associated with the northern plains, the latter with the southern mountains and valleys; one might almost trace a dividing line along the points where the hard primitive rock of the Ardennes plateau gives place to the younger limestone and other strata that make up the Flemish plains. But the line would not be mathematically exact, since South Brabant is

Walloon, and Brussels City a Walloon island in a Flemish sea. As a generalisation, however, this physical division between the respective territories of the Walloons and Flemings is fair enough. Their long, and peaceful, co-existence side by side is one of the wonders of history.

The Walloons probably have the superior claim to be regarded as the descendants of the Belgic tribes on whom the Romans imposed their civilisation and their laws ; the Flemings almost certainly have their origin in German colonists established in the western plains of Belgium by Roman emperors.

At the time of the imperial occupation Belgium was largely but unequally Romanised. The great coal district, then a forest, which forms a solid wedge between the north and south—the Walloon country, in fact—was a barrier to the advance of the legions. They penetrated the district, it is true, as is shown by the numerous Roman names to be found to-day among Walloon surnames. But they did not dispossess the people of their territory with the completeness characteristic of their occupation of other parts.

The same process was repeated, with even more clearly defined results, in the later Germanic invasions. During the second half of the third century, Frankish raiders carried devastation and desolation into the northern plains. A kind of peaceful penetration by the same people followed, and northern Belgium was practically absorbed by the conquerors. Most of the old population were driven out ; those who remained took on the customs and the language of the Frankish colonisers. The difficult Walloon district was another matter, as it had been for the Romans. Some bands of Franks got through, but whereas in the north they had only met with subdued and terrorised peasants, they found in the Walloon valleys a powerful and prosperous farming community who held tenaciously to their lands, their traditions, and their language. The German influence could make little headway here, and the newcomers, instead of absorbing the Walloons, became themselves absorbed.

This, then, is the reason why part of Belgium is Flemish and the rest Walloon. The difference between them is in the proportion of German blood that courses through their veins. The Fleming is fundamentally Germanic, the Walloon essentially a Celt. Large infusions of German blood introduced by the Roman agency in the first place, and afterwards by the colonising energy of Clovis and Charlemagne, have produced the modern Fleming. The Walloon, except in parts of Brabant and Luxembourg, where the Spanish connection of the Middle Ages modified his type, is virtually the same as he was in the Dark Ages. The pure Walloon is the finest and most distinctive type in Belgium—short, round-headed, dark, but free from swarthiness, and in character, courageous, independent, and progressive ; in every way a contrast to the taller, fairer, long-headed Fleming, conservative in principle, deliberate in speech and action.

The strange thing is that these two races, living side by side but separated by differences of language, tastes, and temperament, have never in the course of history indulged in a racial feud. It is all the more strange because the Walloon was almost as much noted for his turbulence as for his fearlessness. One may note, by the way, that the Walloons of the province of Liège—which may be considered their original home—were specially noted, in former times, for their daring. The characteristic would seem to have survived.

Since the Revolution of 1830, if not before, Flemings and Walloons have doubtless been drawn together by material considerations. Certain economic benefits, the obvious advantages of an *entente* between the Walloon industrials and the Flemish agriculturals, are a powerful argument for preserving a state of harmony, and there has never been any difference between them on the score of religious belief. The Walloon's Catholicism is perhaps not the simple unquestioning faith of the Fleming ; free thought has made some progress with him ; the Walloon country produces the greater part of the sceptics, as it gives birth to the greater number of poli-

tical Socialists. But for the Walloon there is at least no hovering between rival Churches ; it is the Catholic Church, or nothing. Thus religion may fairly be considered part of the bond between him and the Fleming.

There remains the language question. This has always been, and still is, a matter difficult of adjustment. The Flemings still speak Flemish, the great majority of Walloons French. In the Ardennes and in parts of Liege province there are Walloons who speak the old "Romance" tongue—the true Walloon. But even these can speak French as well, so that it may be stated broadly that the entire Walloon population of Belgium is French-speaking. The Flemings, on the other hand, only know their own language, and when they go into a Walloon district, they are like strangers in a foreign land.

Following the Revolution, this fact placed the Flemings at a serious disadvantage, from which they have only recently recovered. The Revolution itself was primarily a Walloon movement ; the Flemings supported it mainly on account of the religious question. They disliked King William's obnoxious proclamation of Dutch as the language of the Courts. But they were very far from taking exception to the Dutch as a race, and had a little more tact been shown by the leaders of Holland, had there been less anxiety to push exclusively Dutch interests, had some brilliant compromise on the religious question been arrived at, the separation might never have taken place. Racially, the Fleming is far nearer to the Dutchman than to the Walloon. The language he speaks is very similar ; he has the same qualities of dourness in speech and slowness in action, the same extraordinary pertinacity when he has once begun to move towards his object. As it was, the direction of the movement was mainly in the hands of Walloon Brussels and Liege, and so was the settlement when success had been achieved. French was then proclaimed as the official language. For centuries it had been the language used in "society," and to the Walloons the official recognition of it seemed a matter of course. The Flemings

could not speak a word of French, and disliked the language almost as much as they had resented Dutch political arrogance. But they were obliged to concur in the arrangement, because the religious gulf between the Dutch and themselves made any other issue seem subsidiary. French, accordingly, was instituted as the "national" language in the Chambers, the Courts, and the Colleges. In the whole story of the Belgian Revolution there is no more striking phenomenon than the suppression by the Flemings, the majority of the population, for the sake of their religion, of their own racial sympathies. There is no more cogent proof of the strength of these sympathies than their active resuscitation as soon as Belgian political unity had been gained.

Hardly was the treaty of separation signed when Flemish feeling began to grow restive under the inconveniences and disabilities imposed by the French system. The Flemish movement so-called began at Ghent in 1836 with the formation, by half a dozen scientific men, of a Flemish review called *Belgisch Museum*. In 1844 Jan Frans Willems, the leader of the movement, summoned a Congress at which it was resolved to exhort the Government to preserve the literary treasures of Flanders by the publication of the ancient texts. The Congresses were repeated, and the romances of Henri Conscience stimulated Flemish pride and aspirations, while the Walloon intellect failed to provide a counterblast. In 1861, the Flemish party in the Chamber succeeded in carrying an address to the king anent "the well-founded demands of the Flemings"; but as regards language no tangible success was gained till 1873, when, in consequence of flagrant legal abuses, a law was passed to the effect that in criminal cases the court should employ the language of the accused person. After that rapid progress was made, although rather in the field of literature and drama than in that of political privilege. But the Flemish text of laws and regulations is now equally valid with the French, and in the five provinces where Flemish is spoken, public notices must be printed in the two lan-

guages, and for the minor Government posts in these provinces a candidate must have a fluent acquaintance with both. In brief, French still remains the language of the administration and of society, and of most of the native literature ; the popular language in the east and south-east is Walloon ; and Flemish has gained a position more in accordance with its antiquity and ancient dignity than was the case for many years after the Revolution.

A perfect settlement of the language question appears to be still distant, though everybody is agreed upon its desirability. Perhaps bi-lingualism alone would solve the problem for practical purposes. But since after some eighty years of otherwise progressive existence the kingdom of Belgium can only claim about ten per cent. of its population as bi-lingual, the chances of this solution would appear slender.

To meet the political needs both of Flemings and Walloons, a constitution was inaugurated in 1830-31 which is, like all "constitutional monarchies," a compromise between monarchic privilege and democratic government.

The Belgian Constitution, as first drafted by the Provisional Government, contained a hundred and thirty-nine articles. By these the new State was declared a "constitutional, representative, and hereditary monarchy" on the English pattern. Leopold I was appointed King, and the succession was vested in his male heirs, with the provision that should the latter fail, the throne would be declared vacant, and a fresh nomination made by a national assembly composed of the two Chambers elected in double strength. In 1894, however, a new article was inserted, providing that in default of male heirs, with the assent of the two Chambers, the King can nominate his successor if he so chooses. The Government consists of the King, the Senate, and the Chamber of Representatives.

The King has the exclusive right of dissolving the Chambers ; in him is vested the executive power, which is delegated to a Cabinet of ministers, and he is the head of the army. In addition to these functions, which are

common to most constitutional sovereigns, he can exercise one privilege which is unique. He can personally initiate proposals for legislation.

The Senate is composed of seventy-six members elected, with certain reservations, by the same electoral body that elects the Chamber of Representatives, and of twenty-six members nominated by the provincial councils. The eligibility of an elected Senator depends on a tax-paying qualification—the minimum being (since 1893) 1200 francs—and on his having reached forty years of age. Nobody under thirty can take part in a senatorial election. Senators chosen by the provincial councils are exempted from the tax qualification, and hence the Socialists have some representation here, as in the other Chamber. A Senator sits for eight years unless a dissolution is ordered, but half the seventy-six elected Senators retire for re-election every four years. The Senators are unpaid and have no privilege except a pass on the State railways. The Chamber of Representatives consists (since 1899) of one hundred and sixty-two members, half of whom are re-elected every two years. A deputy receives 4000 francs a year, and a railway pass. He must have reached twenty-five years of age, and must be, as must a Senator, of Belgian nationality, born or naturalised.

The Belgian ministers represent departments for foreign affairs, colonies, justice, the interior, science and arts, industry, public works, finance, war, agriculture, railways, posts and telegraphs. Occasionally, as in Great Britain, a minister holds more than one portfolio. Ministers may belong to either Chamber, and are entitled to speak in both.

Parliamentary government has answered well in Belgium. The strife of political parties has been sufficiently keen from time to time, but the system has cemented the bond between the Flemings and Walloons, by allowing the more explosive elements among either to find a legitimate outlet. It is probable that the two great parties in the State, the Liberals and the Catholics, still represent broadly the political sentiments of Wal-

loon and Fleming respectively ; but the difference between them is now a party difference, instead of a racial one. It was the Revolution that first brought Walloon and Fleming, Liberal and Catholic, into line, and the first Belgian king was quick to see the advantages of this temporary homogeneity.

Leopold I did his utmost to maintain the alliance between Catholics and Liberals. Hence up to 1845 his ministries were of a composite character. But in 1846 a purely Catholic ministry was formed, and following the election of 1847, a purely Liberal one. From this date the ministry has always been homogeneous, consisting of representatives of the party commanding a working majority in the Chamber of Representatives.

The Liberals held office till 1852, and again from 1857 to 1870. From 1871 to 1878 the Cabinet consisted of moderate Catholics, under the leadership of M. Malou. Re-elected in 1884, the Catholic party have since maintained their supremacy.

By 1886 Socialism had begun to make itself felt as a political force in the land. This was the year of the industrial troubles at Liège, and six years later a dangerous strike at Brussels forced the Government to undertake the reform of the franchise. Largely as a result of this measure, the Catholics came back after the election of 1894 with an enormous majority ; the Walloon provinces returned a number of Socialists, and the old Liberal party ceased to exist. Besides the Socialists, the Catholic Democrats, representing the popular wing of the Clerical party, had come into existence. Thus we see, in Belgium as in England, the old rigid lines of demarcation between the great parties tending to disappear, and new sections of opinion modifying the old, or claiming a separate political existence. Side by side with the changes in parties have come changes in the electoral system. The most recent of these is the introduction of proportional representation, which came into force in 1900, when "universal plural voting" had been operative for six years. Previous to 1894 there were property and other qualifications which

restricted the vote to less than 140,000 out of a population of six and a half millions. At present every Belgian is given one vote on his attaining twenty-five years of age, and after one year's residence in his commune ; but by the side of this very simple system there exists another, of plural voting, which modifies its effect. Thus, a married man or a widower with children, who pays five francs of direct taxes, is given a second vote on his attaining the age of thirty-five. University degrees, official standing, and large property are also qualifications for extra votes, which cannot, however, exceed three for any individual. In 1912 there were 1,721,755 qualified electors on the roll of voters for the Chamber of Representatives, while the electorate for the Senate numbered 1,460,236 ; owing to the plural system, the votes amounted to 2,763,513 and 2,475,679 respectively.

If the political constitution of Belgium is well adapted to the dual character of the people, the special characteristics of the latter are intimately reflected in the administrative system. In medieval times, the Netherlander was a citizen of his town before his province, and of his province before his country as a whole : a fact which goes far to explain the disconnected nature of Flemish history. Even to-day a man is "of Antwerp" or "of Liége" rather than of Belgium, and, except in time of national crisis, when the name of his country exercises a singularly strong rallying power, his interests are pre-eminently local. The survival of this powerful civic sense within him is at the root of his very elaborate administrative arrangements, involving an inordinate degree of local autonomy when one considers the size of the country and of the population. Belgium is divided into nine provinces : East Flanders, West Flanders, Hainaut, Brabant, Antwerp, Namur, Liége, Limbourg (part), and Luxembourg (part). These provinces are subdivided into 342 cantons and 2623 communes. Over each province presides a governor nominated by the King. Every province is in its way a little State. The provincial councils are elective bodies, with the functions of local government in regard to taxation and finance.

They are empowered to ordain certain police regulations independently of the Government and the communes alike, and can nominate candidates for certain judicial appointments. Their sessions are short, but they hand over the execution of their decisions to a small body of delegates—rarely more than half a dozen—who constitute the “permanent deputation,” and are presided over by the governor. Besides these purely executive duties, the permanent deputation possesses administrative powers of its own. Thus an important duty it discharges is the supervision of the administration of the communes. One may add that the provincial authority is specially charged to bring to the notice of the Minister of the Interior any provincial or communal legislation that affects the general interest or is suspected of illegality.

The communal councils are elective bodies, like the Chambers and the provincial councils. For each commune of 5000 inhabitants or over, a burgomaster is appointed by the council; the electorate for the latter is restricted to those who have resided three years in the commune. The communal council has legislative and executive powers in local matters, the latter being entrusted to the burgomaster; these are, of course, subject to the supervision of the higher authorities. On the other hand, the central authority entrusts them with the surveyance of the application of the State laws to the commune. The administration and accounts of committees charged with the upkeep of churches, &c., are also subject to inspection by the communal council, and if the resources of these subordinate bodies are insufficient for the necessary work in hand, the communal council must make up the difference.

Apart from the extent of its application to public education, the religious question has never presented difficulties in modern Belgium. The vast majority of Belgians are Catholics. This accounts for the fact that out of a total annual grant of 7,118,000 francs made by the Government to the various religious establishments in 1904, nearly 7,000,000 was apportioned to the Roman

**Church in Belgium.** However, there is no recognised State religion, the constitution-makers of 1830 having apparently impressed on their posterity the soundness of a dictum of one of their number : "There is no more connection between the State and Religion than between the State and Geometry." Owing to the preponderance of Catholics, nevertheless, the Catholic Church enjoys all the advantages of an Establishment, and also all those of a free body. The hierarchy consists of the Archbishop of Malines, and the Bishops of Bruges, Ghent, Liége and Tournai, the first-named receiving £800 a year, and the others £600 apiece. Proportionately, Protestants and Jews enjoy the same advantages, pecuniary and otherwise, as the Catholics ; the constitution guaranteeing absolute liberty of conscience, and the grant being fixed according to the numbers of these denominations. As the total number of Protestants and Jews does not amount to more than 15,000, the grant is necessarily small.

A general survey of the central and local government of Belgium, while it reveals a great many features that the kingdom shares with other constitutional monarchies, discovers also certain points of distinction. It has been noticed that the head of the State, the King, has at least one peculiar prerogative, that of initiating legislation ; ministers also, of either house, are entitled to speak in both. We thus have a constitutional monarch, who is that and a little more—a concession to the long-standing Flemish tradition of personal loyalty to the sovereign ; and ministers who, whatever their class origin, enjoy all the freedom the legislature can give them—a concession to the new democratic sentiment. We have seen how the old civic pride, civic authority, and responsibility is retained in the modern communal government. The elaborate care with which this administrative scheme has been worked out is equalled by the pains bestowed on the judicial system. The distinctive feature of the latter is the *Cour de Cassation*, whose president is the highest legal functionary in

Belgium. This is a kind of censor of the judgments of other courts. Every judgment is examined automatically by the *Cour de Cassation* to see whether it is in accordance with the Code, and if it is not, the verdict is simply annulled. No cases, except those in which a minister of State is the accused, are directly tried by this court. One judge, assisted by a staff of revisers, suffices for it.

The Code Belge is an amalgam of the old laws of the nine provinces and the Code Napoleon, adapted to modern requirements. The unit of the judicial system is the *Juge de Pais* court, corresponding to the British county court, and there is one of these in each of the 342 cantons. Other courts are the *Cour de Première Instance* and the *Cour d'appel*—both of which are explained by their titles. There are twenty-six courts of first instance distributed among principal centres of the kingdom, and three courts of appeal, at Brussels, Ghent, and Liége respectively. In a few of the large commercial towns, such as Antwerp and Liége, there are also special courts for trying commercial cases. These relieve the work of the regular courts, and from both there is the same right of appeal.

Judges are appointed by the King, from a list of barristers prepared by the Senate and the courts, and a judge can only be removed by the unanimous vote of his brother judges. Criminal jurisdiction is covered by three courts : the *Tribunaux de Police*, the *Tribunaux Correctionnels*, and the *Cour d'Assises*. Capital punishment is still legal, but is never enforced ; a prisoner under sentence of death is imprisoned for life, in solitary confinement and perpetual silence. There are important prisons at Brussels, Ghent, and Louvain, and an agricultural criminal colony at Merxplas, accommodating an average number of 2000 convicts.

The education question is one of those which have profoundly divided political parties in Belgium. Apart from the question whether education should be obligatory or otherwise, which has now been settled the

secularisation of teaching, or rather the principle of unsectarianism, was long and bitterly contended for by the Liberals against the Catholics. The latter held out for a long time. The first bill on primary education, which was passed in 1842, gave to the Catholic clergy a right of supervision, children belonging to other religious persuasions being simply exempted from attendance ; and this state of things was maintained till 1879, when the Chamber, led by a Liberal minister, M. Frère-Ortan, passed a bill establishing unsectarian teaching. Religious, *i.e.* Catholic, instruction was retained, but it was to be given out of school hours and only to those who asked for it. The clergy at once threw their utmost influence and energy into opposing this measure. The bishops ordered that absolution should be refused to teachers in the secular schools—"les écoles sans Dieu"—and to the parents of the children who attended them. Every kind of pressure was brought to bear on the population, with the result that thousands of children were transferred from the State schools to the Church schools, and the working of the Act was thereby rendered ineffective. In 1884 a Catholic majority was returned to the Chamber, and the first act of the ministry, under M. Malou, was to repeal the Act of 1879, and to substitute a measure empowering the communes to maintain the private Catholic schools established since that date, and to repress unsectarian schools as they wished, except in cases where twenty-five heads of families demanded the retention of such a school. The State, however, continued to subsidize all communal schools that were retained, Catholic and unsectarian alike.

In 1912 a Catholic premier, M. Schollaert, brought forward a proposal to divide State grants between the two classes of schools, according to the number of pupils. The measure proved unpopular, and the ministry had to resign on account of it. Since then no attempt seems to have been made to alter the educational status arrived at in 1884, though much has been done towards consoli-

dating and extending educational effectiveness. At present, education is compulsory by law, and free to those who cannot pay for it. There are primary schools, with an age limit of fourteen for the pupils, and secondary or middle schools through which all aiming at Government employment must pass ; a scholar obtaining a certificate from a secondary school qualifies for a mastership in the primary schools. The pay of a school-master varies from a minimum of £48 to £96 a year, to a maximum of £80 to £152 after twenty-four years' service. The schools are visited by district inspectors appointed by the Government, and in the case of the middle schools the Government reserves the right to appoint teachers, &c. One must not omit to mention the infant schools, almost entirely frequented by non-paying scholars.

The State has established two universities, one at Ghent, the other at Liége ; twenty Athenées Royaux, for the teaching of mathematics and classics, corresponding to the French *lycées* ; there are also a large number of State-aided schools for special purposes, such as the Royal Academy of Fine Arts at Antwerp, conservatoires of music at Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, and elsewhere ; commercial and professional schools ; and schools for the army and of navigation.

The two free universities are at Brussels and Louvain. Brussels is the more "advanced" of the two ; its students include a very strong Socialist Radical element, devoted to political philosophy and speculation. The university was founded in 1834, and is specially famous for its studies in physiology, bacteriology, sociology, as well as the wider intellectual pursuits to which reference has been made. Of the two State universities, that of Liége is renowned for the technical schools attached to it.

## HISTORICAL SKETCH

The history of Belgium properly begins with the Revolution of 1830. But to understand this history, it is necessary to recall the outstanding phenomena of the earlier history of the Netherlands, of which Belgium formed part. Through the long and tortuous succession of events, beginning with the Roman and Frankish conquests and ending with the Treaty of Separation from Holland, the destinies of the future State of Belgium were gradually being shaped, and the character of her peoples was being slowly matured by a sustained and pitiless ordeal. Certain periods and phases of Netherlandish history are indelibly impressed on the mind. One need not linger over the Roman and Frankish periods, picturesque as they may be; nor over the Northmen's conquests; nor over the Crusades, beyond saying that the knights of the Low Countries played a brilliant part in the first crusades—it was a Lotharingian, Godfrey de Bouillon, who became first King of Jerusalem, and Baldwin IX, Count of Flanders and Hainaut, who was Emperor of Constantinople. But the rise to power of the House of Burgundy marks a definite step towards the realisation of nationality in the Low Countries. Just as the Crusades had marked the final triumph of the feudal system, the division of the country into innumerable petty principalities, so the rule of the Burgundian dukes was the first great effort to break down this system. Then, as in modern times, the question at issue was whether the provinces should extend their sympathies to France or Germany. Philip the Bold, who, by his marriage with Marguerite de Maele (1384), became heir to the Count of Flanders, which country he subsequently joined to Burgundy, was French in blood and sympathies; but his son, John the Fearless, in his hatred of the Armagnac faction, adopted a Flemish motto and did his best to further Flemish interests. Philip the Good, grandson of Philip the Bold, and an implacable enemy of the House of

Valois, set himself to build up an empire of his own, and by means of marriages, intrigues, and fighting, contrived to unite the whole of the Netherlands, Holland as well as Belgium, under his authority. His was the first attempt to constitute a Flemish "culture"; and though this culture was expressed in French—French being the language of his Court at Bruges—the Flemish nobility participated, and Flemish painters of the school of Van Eyck strove in line and colour to embody his splendid and picturesque ideal. The Court, as we have just said, retained the French tongue, and to some extent French customs; but in every other respect it sought to differentiate itself from France, and to give a Germanic colour to its atmosphere. Unluckily Philip's only son, Charles the Bold, whose policy was the same as his father's, was killed under the walls of Nancy. But the House of Burgundy had accomplished a good deal in the way of consolidating the Netherlands. They had established the idea of an independent State; they had introduced some measure of cohesion between the peoples of the provinces and of the towns. They would doubtless have carried out the unification process more completely, had it not been for the opposition from the towns themselves.

By the end of the thirteenth century, three cities of Flanders, Bruges, Ghent, and Ypres, had developed an amazing affluence and power. In the twelfth century Bruges had obtained a considerable commercial status; by the thirteenth its renown was universal. It was connected with the seaport of Damme by means of the river Zwyn, and thither came ships with the world's merchandise from all quarters. It became one of the great marts of the Hanseatic League and of the English wool trade. The channel of the Zwyn was as familiar to mariners as were the Venetian lagoons, and the great market-place presented a spectacle as animated, and a crowd as diversified, as that of the Place of St. Mark.

Under Philip the Good, who made Bruges his capital, the town both reached its culminating point of prosperity and experienced the first symptoms of its decadence.

While the traders of the world were assembling here in ever greater numbers, while a large colony of artists were constantly employed in adding masterpieces of painting and carving to the town's material wealth, the Zwyn was beginning to silt up. The unhappy administration of Maximilian of Austria, followed by the wars of Charles the Bold, played havoc with the commercial life, and at the end of the fifteenth century the foreign bankers who had lived in Bruges and battened on its prosperity began to migrate to Antwerp. Fifty years later the quays of Damme had practically been deserted by the foreign ships. Desperate efforts were made by the Brugeois to ward off the blows of fate. But the silting of the Zwyn grew worse, and perhaps the principal citizens, grown indifferent and lazy with their long prosperity, made no special effort. The religious wars settled finally the fate of Bruges. But in the Burgundian era, its prosperity was a thorn in the side of its over-lord. Its own civic oligarchs had early exacted charters from the reigning dukes, guaranteeing them practical independence in government; and they clung jealously to their privilege, even at the cost of bloodshed, to the end.

The history of Ghent is similar. It is rich in quarrels between the townsfolk and their lord, quarrels between the aristocrats and the bourgeoisie, quarrels of the bourgeoisie among themselves. Ghent's distinction was that its quarrels were more ferocious than most. Nor did the town confine them to its own boundaries. On the contrary, it aspired to the leadership of all Flanders, and when in the fourteenth century Count Louis of Nevers went over to the King of France in the Hundred Years War, it was Ghent that led the popular revolt against the feudal Count. The latter having been got rid of, Jacques van Artevelde, a bourgeois of Ghent, not only took direction of the town's affairs, but became the virtual ruler of Flanders. Van Artevelde was a clear-sighted statesman, who saw that the only way to secure the well-being of the Flemish towns was to evoke the sentiment of Flemish nationality. He dreamed of

making Flanders a united democratic republic, free of princes, and their ways ; and to this end all his policy was directed. Unfortunately he was in advance of his time. The ordinary citizen was a Gantois before a Fleming, and even a great burgess before a Gantois. Artevelde's nationalist aspirations were checked by civic narrowness and jealousies ; and when he came to loggerheads with the powerful and tyrannic corporation of weavers, his end came. He was assassinated by a tool of the corporation ; and the princes came back.

However, there was not peace for very long. In 1379, exasperated by the arrogance and exactions of the grand bourgeoisie, the working class revolted. As Count Louis of Flanders was suspected of favouring the aristocratic party, the quarrel became a war between sovereign and subjects. Years of sanguinary fighting followed, the Gantois getting decidedly the worst of it ; but they fought so desperately that after their final subjugation by the House of Burgundy, it was thought prudent to confirm them in most of their former privileges. But they had not yet learned wisdom, and a series of fruitless outbreaks against the Duke left them worse off than ever before. The religious wars of the sixteenth century appear to have finally broken their spirit.

Ypres in the eleventh century was the largest town in Flanders and the centre of the cloth industry ; to-day its normal population is 16,000. In the thirteenth century the town obtained charters of self-government and free commerce. These charters ensured the development of trade and the well-being of the workers, as in other Flemish towns ; but unfortunately, in the case of Ypres, the possession of liberty brought with it social rivalries, and the latter in the fourteenth century reached a bitterness that provoked civil war. In 1382 an internecine struggle raged between the towns of Flanders, and an army from Ghent laid siege to Ypres. The aristocracy of the town sympathised with the besiegers, and wished to open the gates to them ; the bourgeois refused. In the battle that ensued a large part of the town was set on fire. When the tumult was over, the citizens applied

to Philip the Bold for permission to rebuild. But the Duke of Burgundy had marked Ypres as the most turbulent town in his domain, and withheld his consent. As a result, the cloth-makers sought other centres of activity. The wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries completed the town's downfall.

As the facilities for commerce increased under the Burgundian dukes, the towns of Brabant and other provinces developed their resources. But the three Flemish towns just cited were the first in the field, and they illustrate both the early development of the civic sense and the difficulty of combining that sense with the ideal of a centralised national government. The difficulty did not become less when popular civic institutions began to replace the old aristocratic ones, and the task devolved on the central authority not merely of curbing the town but of reconciling the powerful factions within the town. Loyalty to the reigning house was not on the whole a strong civic virtue ; its absence in Bruges and Ghent led Philip the Good, by no means a tyrannous prince, to visit these towns with temporary destruction. The Burgundians, however, sometimes found it possible to use a town for their own purposes ; Brussels, for example, was unceasingly loyal. But then Brussels owed most of her prosperity to the presence of the Court ; her principal industries were industries of luxury which the Court aristocracy encouraged—lace, tapestries, carved furniture and armour.

The direct line of Burgundy having become extinct, the Duchy was absorbed in the kingdom of Austria when Charles V, a Belgian prince, born at Ghent, became Emperor of Austria and King of Spain. The affairs of a vast realm left Charles little time to give to the Netherlands ; but his aunt, Margaret of Austria, who governed here during his minority, and his prime minister, Chieres, developed the principal institutions founded by Philip. This, however, was the last progress that was made towards a Flemish State for some time. Philip II, the son of Charles V, had nothing in common with the country of his origin. His sympathies were purely

Spanish, and he was quite ready to sacrifice the lives and happiness of his Flemish subjects to his religious bigotry. Hence the religious wars of the sixteenth century, which separated the northern from the southern provinces, and set back the clock for national unity for more than two centuries. Alva's six years of persecution completely destroyed the civilising and centralising work accomplished by the Grand Dukes of the West. He stamped heresy out of Belgium, and with it most of her wealth and civilisation. The religious struggle ruined what was then the greatest commercial asset of the Netherlands, the town and port of Antwerp.

The rise of Antwerp in the fifteenth century had coincided with the decline of Bruges. When the Zwyn began to be impassable, the great cosmopolitan bankers came to Antwerp, and the foreign ships followed the bankers. Yet it was not only the heritage of Bruges that Antwerp acquired and magnified ; the latter was the first European port to profit by the discovery of the New World. Hitherto the principal trade route of the world had been the Mediterranean. But the Turkish conquests and the increase of piracy, as practised by Barbary corsairs, had by the end of the fifteenth century the effect of diverting sea-commerce to the Atlantic. Trade was no longer with Asia Minor and the East, but with America and the Indies by the route of Vasco da Gama. Naturally the ports on the Atlantic and its contiguous seas profited by this movement ; Antwerp and London especially. Under Charles V Antwerp had become the wealthiest city on the Continent. In the middle of the sixteenth century a thousand foreign merchants, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, English resided within its walls. Five hundred vessels entered and left the Scheldt daily ; two thousand wagon-loads of wares from France and Germany came to the port for shipment. Eight canals, with a hundred bridges, converged on the centre of the town. The value of the imports about 1569 amounted to something like 31,870,200 florins. There were well over 100,000 inhabitants.

War and revolution destroyed this unexampled prosperity. The doctrines of Luther and Calvin had made some progress in the town, and in 1566 a band of Protestant fanatics broke into the cathedral, tore down its statues and defaced its walls and windows, destroyed the paintings and profaned the shrines. This was the signal for the terrible repression by the Duke of Alva, the "Spanish Fury,"<sup>2</sup> and the "French Fury" of the Duc d'Alençon. Albert and Isabella found Antwerp ruined and depopulated. Finally the Peace of Westphalia (1648) closed the Scheldt against sea-going vessels, and the doom of Antwerp was sealed for 150 years.

What happened at Antwerp was the measure of the ruin that befell the general prosperity of the Low Countries. But the religious wars have a significance apart from the commercial disasters and the actual political changes they effected ; they illustrate the extraordinary devotion, in spite of everything, of the southern provinces to the Catholic faith. The name of Spain was made hateful throughout the land by Alva's excesses, culminating in the murder of the loved popular leaders, Counts Egmont and Hoorn ; the courage and statesmanlike diplomacy of William, Prince of Orange, promised a fair future to all who came under his rule. Yet, by the signing of the League of Arras, a vast body of Walloons declared for Catholicism and the Spanish king, while Brabant and Flanders were very shortly afterwards won over by Alexander Farnese. Thus William the Silent, instead of becoming King of the United Netherlands, was only Stadtholder of Holland ; and the southern provinces, instead of entering into an honourable hegemony under a wise and competent ruler, remained a devastated dependency of a decaying Catholic Empire. The motive for the separation from Holland can only have been religious ; William the Silent had embraced the Reformed religion, and so powerful was the influence of Mother Church, that despite the hideous cruelties perpetrated in her name, the prince had thereby placed himself outside the pale.

The separation of North and South was final and irre-

vocable. Henceforth Holland was to be Lutheran and Calvinist, the yet unmade kingdom of Belgium Catholic. It is probable that William the Silent misjudged the strength of the religious attachment of the southern peoples ; it is certain that his successor in the early nineteenth century did so. But if both had divined it to the utmost, it is doubtful whether either could have modified its political consequences. The power of the Church in the Netherlands was of long standing. Moreover, behind the spiritual arm of the bishops was, in most cases, the temporal might of emperors and princes. Liége, for example, owed its first prosperity to the Church, thanks to whom in the eleventh century it was already a veritable capital. But behind the feeling of loyalty to the Church was a genuine devotion to the Faith for which it stood, and this devotion was so strong that no political change that over-rode or ignored it could have any permanence or hope of permanence.

When Albert and Isabella became governors-general of the Netherlands, there was a slight revival of prosperity. But these rulers died—Albert in 1621 and Isabella in 1633—without issue, and the country then passed under the rule of Philip IV, to be known henceforth as the Spanish Netherlands. Meanwhile France and the United Provinces had formed a close alliance against Spain, and the unfortunate country was thus hemmed in by enemies on two sides. The struggle between France and Spain went on intermittently, and with nearly every peace that was patched up between them the Netherlands lost one or the other of its possessions. A large part of Artois, numerous towns in Flanders, and Luxembourg, Lille, Douai, Charleroi, Oudenarde, Tournai, were among the places ceded to France, and though some of them were restored by the Treaty of Nymwegen (1679) and the Peace of Ryswick (1697), the loss of territory was very considerable. But more important than this was the loss of trade. In Philip II's reign a large body of weavers had emigrated, and with them went the vitality of a staple industry. The clothing industry of Flanders died. The closing by the Dutch

of the Scheldt, by a clause in the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), throttled the trade of Antwerp.

During the long struggle between Louis XIV and the Grand Alliance, Belgium was once more the cockpit of Europe. By the Peace of Utrecht (1713) her connection with Spain was severed, and she was handed over to Austria, then under the Hapsbourg Emperor, Charles VI. For nearly a century she was known as the Austrian Netherlands. On the whole, the Austrian archdukes governed her wisely ; but Joseph II's reforming zeal provoked great discontent. The provinces revolted in 1789, but they were subdued the following year, and Austrian sovereignty was once more re-established. It lasted till 1792, when the armies of revolutionary France invaded Belgium and put an end to the Hapsbourg supremacy. By the Treaty of Campo Formio (1797), Belgium received the Code Napoleon, and was incorporated in the French Empire.

It was divided into nine cantons : Lys, of which the capital was Bruges ; Deux-Nèthes, with Antwerp for its capital ; Escaut with Ghent ; Dyle with Brussels ; Lower Meuse with Maestricht ; Sambre-et-Meuse with Namur ; Ourthe with Liége ; Jemappes with Mons ; Forêts with Luxembourg. Napoleon did something to revive industries, especially the mining industry in Hainaut and the great metallurgic industry at Liége.

The French occupation came to an end in 1814, and shortly afterwards Belgium was united with Holland, to form the Kingdom of the Netherlands under William I, Prince of Orange. This arrangement had its economic advantages : Holland was a commercial and maritime country, Belgium industrial and agricultural ; in their combination lay the promise of a successful State. Yet the failure of the attempted union was a foregone conclusion. Lapse of time had not lessened the religious difference ; it had accentuated racial and temperamental points of distinction between the Dutchman and the Walloon, and even between the Dutchman and the Fleming. Moreover, the Belgians had never forgiven the Dutch the closing of the Scheldt, and the Barrier Treaty

of 1715, whereby Holland retained the right, conceded to her during the war, of garrisoning the principal Belgian fortresses on the French frontier. Thus the seeds of friction were already sown, and it was not long before they bore fruit. William's primary mistake was to cherish the root idea of Dutch predominance. Although the population of Belgium was more than half as much again as that of Holland, the two countries had equal representation in the second chamber of the States-General. The great majority of public offices were filled by Dutchmen. Great offence was given to the Clerical party in Belgium by the establishment of a Philosophical College at Louvain, with the requirement that every priest, before ordination, should study there for two years; and though an agreement on this question was afterwards patched up, the offence was not forgotten by the Belgian Clericals. A knowledge of Dutch was made a necessary qualification for any person entering the public service. Against all this, it must be conceded that William took a conscientious if rather narrow view of his responsibilities to his Belgian subjects, and it must not be forgotten that he succeeded both in stimulating their commerce and promoting an intellectual revival. Nevertheless, the sense of injustice rankled in Belgium, and drawn together by their common grievance the two great Belgian parties, Clericals and Liberals, presented in 1828 petitions demanding a separate administration for their country. This was the condition of affairs when the Revolution of July, 1830, took place in Paris. It was the spark that set Belgium on fire. If the Parisians could do as much for their liberties, why could not the Belgians do the same?

On August 25, 1830, a performance was given at the Théâtre de Monnaie, Brussels, of *La Muette de Portici*, the plot of which deals with the Naples revolt under Masaniello. The same evening, the crowd rioted, and sacked the house of Van Maenen, an unpopular minister of William, and the offices of the official Government journal. While a civic guard for maintaining order was quickly formed at Brussels, a deputation proceeded to

The Hague, and called upon William to redress the wrongs of the nation. The King temporised, and as matters became more threatening, sent troops to Brussels under the command of his second son, Prince Frederick. These attempted to overawe the city ; but after three days' fighting in the streets of Brussels they were compelled to beat a retreat. A provisional government had already been established in the city, and a decree promulgated that the Belgian provinces should constitute an independent State.

Among the revolutionists were several who favoured the idea of the country becoming a French protectorate. Louis Philippe, however, and Talleyrand, foreseeing the European complications that would arise if this plan were carried out, discountenanced such a course, and came to a diplomatic arrangement with Lord Palmerston, whereby the independence and the neutrality of Belgium were guaranteed, and Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, who had married one of the daughters of Louis Philippe, was elected to the Belgian throne. The latter made his entry into Brussels on July 19, 1831. The diplomatic Congress which sat in London then proceeded to draw up a constitution on the British parliamentary pattern.

The Dutch Government did not relinquish their hold without a struggle. A force of 45,000 infantry and 6000 cavalry was dispatched across the frontier, and, coming into contact with a Belgian army of 25,000 near Louvain, hastily raised by Leopold, routed the latter and came near to capturing the new King. Leopold, however, made good his retreat to Brussels, and since a French army was advancing to his support, the Dutch did not consider it prudent to push home their advantage. Meanwhile the conference in London was busy drawing up a treaty for the separation of Belgium and Holland. This treaty, which contained twenty-four articles, provided for the division of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg between the two kingdoms, William retaining possession of the Luxembourg fortress ; a portion of Limburg was also reserved to Holland ; Maestricht

district was partitioned. The Scheldt was declared open to the commerce of both countries, and the National Debt was divided.

The treaty was signed in November, 1831, and within six months had been ratified by France, Belgium, Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia. William alone remained obdurate. His troops still held Antwerp ; he refused either to sign the treaty or to give up this important fortress. Efforts at a peaceful solution of the difficulty having proved fruitless, Great Britain and France had recourse to force. A British fleet blockaded the Dutch coast ; a French army, under Marshal Gérard, laid siege to Antwerp. The town capitulated on December 23, 1832, but the Dutch still held forts which enabled them to control the navigation of the Scheldt, and it was not till 1839 that William finally bound himself to adhere to the twenty-four articles.

It is necessary to remember that the Revolution of 1830 was brought to a successful issue only through the union of the two great political parties, Catholics and Liberals. This union Leopold set himself to maintain ; and it was very largely owing to his wise and statesman-like handling of the two parties that the kingdom emerged safely from various crises that confronted it before his reign had run its course. One of these was the French Revolution of 1848. A Liberal ministry was in power at that time, and an attempt was made by the Socialistic wing of that party to stir up a revolutionary movement. It failed for lack of popular support. Following this, great attention was directed to the stimulating of private industry, including the extension of roads, railways and canals, and the formation of commercial treaties with foreign countries ; this policy of development still further confirmed the trust of the Belgian people in their King. In 1857 the military had to be called out to deal with a violent agitation provoked by the Government of M. de Decker, which had brought in a bill placing the administration of charities in the hands of the priesthood. Eventually the bill was withdrawn, the ministry resigning in consequence.

This was one of very few attempts made by either party to introduce legislation that was incompatible with the sentiment or prosperity of the bulk of the nation.

The reign of Leopold I was fortunate for Belgium in that, thanks to the firmness and discretion of his rule, she was able to progress normally and peacefully through her various political vicissitudes. He died in 1865, and was succeeded by his second son, Leopold II. Five years later came the Franco-German War, and with it a danger to Belgian neutrality. Prompt measures were taken to provide against contingencies. Parliament voted a large war credit, the army was strengthened, and troops were moved to the frontiers. The excitement was reflected in England, where the Government asserted its intention to maintain Belgian integrity in accordance with the treaty of 1839. The belligerent powers, at Great Britain's instance, agreed to respect the neutrality of the provinces, and on this occasion the pledge of both was scrupulously observed. A portion of the French army routed at Sedan did indeed cross the frontier, but they at once laid down their arms and were interned.

In 1886, discontent among the Flemish working men, fomented by the preaching of revolutionary Socialism, resulted in disturbances that for a while threatened the internal stability of the country. The ironworkers of Liége went on strike, and though the outbreak was suppressed by the military, the subsequent rejection of bills for extending the franchise occasioned the proclamation by the Labour Party of a general strike. In Brussels there were violent demonstrations, and the trouble looked like spreading far and wide. The Government now saw that revision of the electoral franchise was inevitable, and with commendable courage introduced a measure establishing the hitherto untried "suffrage universal plural" (see pp. 15, 16). The bill, however, was not carried into law until the session of 1894-5, and then only after violent opposition.

Only one other question became acute during Leopold II's reign—the administration of the Congo; to this

reference will be found in our description of the famous Belgian colony. Leopold died in 1909 without leaving a son to succeed him, and his brother, the Count of Flanders, having pre-deceased him, the latter's son, Albert, assumed the throne. The early years of his reign were undisturbed by any political crisis of magnitude, and it was not till the summer of 1914, when war was declared between the powers of the Triple Entente and Germany and Austria, that the progress of Belgium's peaceful development was stayed. The Germans, disregarding the "scrap of paper" in which they had pledged themselves to observe Belgian neutrality, crossed her frontier, took Liége after a heroic resistance by its defenders, battered down the fortress of Namur, occupied Brussels without resistance, and swept into France. The fall of Antwerp, followed by that of Ostend, put them in possession of nearly the whole country, which they proceeded to reduce with indescribable harshness to its inhabitants, thousands of whom sought refuge in England. The Belgian army acquitted itself with extraordinary devotion and courage, showing a resource in attack and a steadiness in defence that have completely silenced its critics. Those of the latter who complained of the army's small numbers, its lack of powerful artillery, and its inadequate commissariat, surely forgot the conditions under which it came into being. Its principle was purely defensive; Belgium's neutrality was guaranteed by the international settlement, and she had no cause to anticipate aggression by a foreign power. To have maintained a strong standing army would have discounted her own wholly peaceable intentions, and possibly have provoked such aggression. Only when the growing arrogance of Germany began some few years ago to threaten the peace of Europe did the rulers of Belgium consider it prudent, as a precautionary measure, to make an increase in her military force.

In 1911, the total effective strength of the army, on a peace footing, was 3540 officers and 44,000 men. In time of war, the above forces were to be increased

to 100,000 men and 21,000 horses for the field army, and 70,000 men for fortress defence.

At the end of 1912 a new army scheme was brought in, bringing the peace strength up to 150,000 and the war strength to 330,000. In the following year 14,900 new recruits were enrolled. At the same time the length of service was altered from twenty to fifteen months for infantry, fortress batteries, &c., from thirty-six to twenty-four months for cavalry, from twenty-two to twenty-one months for horse artillery, and from twenty-four to twelve months for the *bataillon d'administration*.

The commissariat, on a peace footing, consists of only 29 officers, 290 men, and 287 horses.

Besides these forces there is the mounted gendarmerie, composed of picked men, and numbering over 4000 officers and men; and the *garde civique*, consisting altogether of about 43,000.<sup>1</sup>

Belgian statesmanship could not possibly have foreseen the cynical breach of faith which placed the country temporarily at the invader's mercy, and it is difficult to see any grounds for the hostile criticism that has been levelled at her alleged backwardness in military preparation.

## THE TOWNS

The history of Belgium is mainly the history of its towns. It was the three great thirteenth-century towns of Bruges, Ghent, and Ypres that constituted the power

<sup>1</sup> The army is recruited by conscription of the older type, military service being obligatory on the eldest or the only son of every Belgian family, at the age of nineteen; other sons are exempted, unless one of them should substitute himself for the eldest.

At Beverloo, in the province of Limbourg, there is a great training camp, where 20,000 men can be accommodated. There are also artillery and rifle ranges at Braschaet, near Antwerp. At Brussels is a staff college for officers; at Ypres is a riding school where a course is obligatory for the cavalry and horse artillery. Military instruction is also given at the Ecole Militaire at Brussels, the school of cadets at Namur, and other army schools. There are regimental schools and evening classes for illiterate soldiers.

and prosperity of old Flanders ; it was Antwerp that represented the commercial status of the entire Netherlands in the sixteenth century ; Liége and Mons that stand pre-eminently for the industrial revival of the nineteenth ; Brussels that, throughout the ages, was the courtly town. Malines is the spiritual centre, Louvain the intellectual. Tournai, and Tongres, and Charleroi, and Courtrai have all figured as the scenes of striking events in the political and military history of the country.

The Belgian, Walloon or Fleming, loves his ancient cities and is proud of them. In the midst of the fretful striving of modern commerce, he finds time to cherish a very real reverence for these possessions bequeathed to him by the past ; and in the necessary reshaping and enlargement of old towns it is fair to say that there has been less vandalism shown than in any other country in Europe. The latter-day utility of a belfry is probably slight ; but go into almost any Belgian town of historic importance, look along the length of its principal street or *place*, and you will see the belfry tower breaking the sky-line ; sometimes in friendly rivalry to a neighbouring cathedral tower or spire ; often isolated in a sea of house-roofs, its pinnacle rising in solitary majesty, a landmark and a memory and a symbol. Or take the houses of the former merchant guilds, and note with what loving care they have been preserved at Brussels, Antwerp, Ypres, and elsewhere ; or the nunneries, *béguinages*, of Bruges and Ghent—with what solicitude have not these institutions and their buildings been maintained from generation to generation. Knowledge of Belgian towns and of the Belgian people's pride in them helps one to realise what the wanton mischief wrought on these monuments by twentieth-century Germans must mean to the national heart. Reverence for the past is innate in the Belgian, and single-minded. He is glad to show the foreign tourist his treasures, but his Government does not deliberately regard the latter as a source of revenue, nor exploit them with that object as the main one in view. The traveller in Belgium never

gets, as he often gets in Italy, alas ! the impression of a town as a huge museum of antiquities, with contents carefully docketed, labelled, catalogued for his convenience.

Every big town in Belgium has its own sharply distinctive character. The ancient rivalry between Ghent and Bruges has left essential differences in their modern character. One could hardly imagine two cities more utterly apart than Malines and Liége, or Brussels and Antwerp. The contrast between the two latter is partly racial, since Brussels is mainly Walloon, and Antwerp mainly Flemish ; partly economic and historical, since destiny and the accident of locality have assigned to each, from the first, a very different rôle.

Brussels has been called "a little Paris," and there is enough of Paris in the latter-day appearance of the city's fashionable quarters to lend colour to the description. Certain streets recall the Rue de Rennes or the Boulevard Victor Hugo ; certain open spaces the Grand Place ; even such forestal features as the Bois de la Cambre might be called a rather good edition of the Bois de Boulogne. The Brussels houses are perhaps not so high, the squares not so spacious ; but the general aspect of their architecture is undoubtedly Parisian. The Bruxellois have indeed done their best to Frenchify their city, largely because the model was eminently compatible with material comforts, to the blessings of which they are fully alive.

Yet within earshot of the Boulevard du Hainaut and the Boulevard Anspach, both singularly Parisian, one finds plenty of old houses with the stepped gables that bespeak their Flemish origin ; and at a few paces from the smart, brilliantly decorated cafés, which Brussels shares with other large continental cities, are *cabarets* that belong to the Brussels of a former age—cabarets with walls painted with oils and decorated with handbills and advertisements, modest cabarets where the Brussels townsman still comes in the evening to smoke his pipe and drink his national beverage, as his Flemish ancestors did before him.

There are thus two aspects of Brussels, the old and the new, and if the latter appears to predominate, the vigorous existence of the former is still apparent to those with eyes to explore.

The old town of Brussels was built on the spur of a hill, at the base of which flows the Senne, a small tributary of the Rupel, which is itself a tributary of the Scheldt. Little by little it extended its boundaries, both across the river and up the hillside ; increasing in the latter direction until it covered the plateau at the summit. Between the higher and the lower towns a very well-marked division has existed for some time. The lower town contains the shops, the business houses, and the factories ; the higher ground is occupied by the great offices of State, the museums, a few palatial hotels, and mansions of the governing class. It is in accordance with tradition that Government offices should be here, for it was on the hill that the Dukes of Brabant had their residence, and from its eminence that they surveyed the bourgeois quarter below.

For nearly ten years after the Revolution, the new Government was too much occupied with its difficulties to pay attention to the town, and it was not till Burgo-master de Brouckere became chief magistrate that the matter was seriously taken in hand. It was then that the series of boulevards, planted with fine trees, were made round the city, along the line of the ancient boundaries—separating Brussels proper from its suburbs, and constituting for upper and lower towns alike a delightful promenade.

The removal of the duties on food brought into the town was effected in 1860, and the making of modern Brussels proceeded apace. The Senne was bridged ; the great central boulevards, Hainaut, Anspach du Nord, and de la Senne, were constructed ; the lower town was transformed. In the latter process much that was picturesque was swept away, but much also that was inconvenient and insanitary. Wide, airy streets and hygienic houses stand in its place. It is possible that during the last few years the modernisation of Brussels

has been carried too far, as several critics declare. But there are still monuments in the city sufficient to remind us of its traditions and its glories.

The meaning of old Brussels, perhaps, is best summed up in the Grande Place. Here is the Hôtel de Ville, begun in 1402 by Jacques Van Thienen and finished in 1454 by Jean Van Ruystroeck. The latter was entrusted with the west wing. This does not correspond exactly with the other wing, and there is a legend that this was due to an error in calculation on the architect's part—the discovery of which caused him so much mortification that he ended his life by throwing himself from the top of the tower. The slight irregularity, however, is pleasing rather than the reverse, and the main façade, with the central tower, 360 feet in height, and crowned with a gilded copper figure of St. Michael, is one of the finest examples extant of civic architecture in the fifteenth century. The building suffered damage from the French bombardment of 1695, and was shortly afterwards reconstructed, when the columns of the square superstructure of the tower and other details were added to the original design.

The Maison du Roi, opposite the Hôtel de Ville, is a not quite happy modern reconstruction of the early sixteenth-century building, which was practically destroyed in 1695. It was rebuilt in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The original structure underwent much modification in the seventeenth century, and endless research was necessary to enable the nineteenth-century architect to reconstruct it according to the earlier model. The result is a building which, with all its archaeological correctness, is a little cold and prim. It lacks the richness of the sculptured front of the Hôtel de Ville; above all, it lacks the latter's spontaneity. Yet a certain chaste elegance in the design, and the richly gilded ornament, fit in harmoniously enough with the general sumptuousness of the Grande Place; with the Gothic splendour of the Maisons des Corporations that symbolise so perfectly the commercial glories of a bygone age.

The lower town contains few other buildings of first-class historical importance ; no churches, certainly, that can claim that title, for the historic cathedral of St. Gudule and St. Michael is situated on the slope of the hill. The latter was begun in the thirteenth century, and the Bruxellois are justly proud, both of its antiquity and the still surviving glories of its stained glass, ranging from the thirteenth century to the present time ; and they accept with complete composure the fact that the architectural style is nearer to the German Gothic than the French. A Parisian would, apart from any present feeling, resent the sight of Germanic architecture in his capital. The Brussels Walloon acquiesces gladly in its presence, well aware that if one half of his country is French in origin and sympathies, the rather larger half is as emphatically of Germanic stock.

Brussels, in point of fact, and the Bruxellois reflect each other very perfectly ; we mean, of course, the new, the Hausmannised Brussels, excluding the older Flemish remnants. The town has much of Paris in it, but not everything ; the people emulate Parisian ways of life, but with reservations. They live rather less in flats, and more in private houses ; they pass more of their leisure time at home and less of it at the club or the café ; their house is a good deal more to them than a *pied-à-terre*. They go to bed earlier than do the Parisians, and get up earlier ; Brussels is generally awake by 7 o'clock and asleep by 10.30 or 11, except for a few night cafés that keep their doors open till the small hours of the morning. Their domestic arrangements are similar to the Parisian, but unlike the latter they generally make the mid-day *déjeuner* the most important meal of the day. They are too Flemish to be entirely French, and too French to follow the Flemish habits implicitly.

The same social customs prevail in Antwerp as in Brussels, and in the former the bourgeois has the same pride in his home and his city ; but there the resemblance begins and ends. For long Brussels has been the headquarters of the Court and the Administration, and this

fact has appreciably coloured the nature of its population and their modes. Brussels is also a manufacturing town—not in the same category as Liége—and a commercial centre connected with the North Sea by a New Canal, and this again has saved it from becoming a mere official and aristocratic rendezvous. The fact—the only fact that matters—in the case of Antwerp is the river Scheldt. There is an old saying that Antwerp owes the Scheldt to God, and everything else to the Scheldt. One could hardly find a more trite explanation of Antwerp's commercial significance. The town has no manufactures of any moment ; it lives by and for the produce of others brought to it in ships from the four quarters of the earth. It is the most truly cosmopolitan of the world's ports, the greatest market-place of four continents. London alone can be worthily compared to it.

This is due to its extraordinarily favourable position on the great waterway which, easy of access from the sea, provides safe anchorage for thousands of vessels of high tonnage. When the character and value of the Scheldt were once realised, the future of Antwerp was assured. Various derivations have been suggested for the name. Motley thinks that Antwerp means simply “an t'werf”—on the wharf. Others contend that it is named after a castle, built here in the dim ages by a Frankish knight, and called Andhunerbo. But there is recorded a more picturesque origin than either of these.

Once upon a time there dwelt on the banks of the Scheldt a terrible giant named Druon Antigonus. His stature was such that he could stand astride the river, one foot on either side, and wait for the ships that sought shelter here. When one of these came along, he seized it in his enormous hands and demanded toll of the mariners. If this was paid he replaced the ship and its occupants, undamaged, on the water ; but if the sailors were unable or unwilling to pay, he broke up the ship and cut off the right hands of the crew. After some time these malpractices attracted the attention of a valiant Roman warrior, Salvius Brabo, said to have been related by

marriage to Julius Cæsar. Brabo challenged the giant to single combat, and having worsted him, cut off his right hand and threw it into the Scheldt. From this we get Antwerpen, Handwerpen—"to throw the hand."

The etymology may be as fantastic as the legend, but the latter is at least highly symbolical of Antwerp. Antigonus represents the impositions levied on foreign merchandise by the greedy Frankish princes of the Middle Ages, and also the throttling of the town by the closing of the Scheldt; Brabo is the apostle of freedom of commerce. There are two public monuments in Antwerp which seem to us more significant than any others. The one commemorates the exploits of *Salvius Brabo*, the other the opening of the Scheldt. The two together envisage the whole story of Antwerp's prosperity.

Even after the settlement of 1839 Antwerp continued to be crippled by the tolls which the Dutch control of the river mouth enabled them to impose on ingoing and out-going vessels. However, in 1863 Baron Lambermont succeeded in getting the dues commuted for a cash payment of  $36\frac{1}{2}$  million francs, one-third of which was paid by Belgium, and the rest by the other powers interested. From that date the port has advanced by leaps and bounds. Between 1840 and 1849 there entered annually 1544 vessels, of a total tonnage of 242,468. In 1898 there were 5385 ships with a tonnage of 8,482,043. The value of the imports was raised from 410 millions of francs in 1864 to about 1556 millions in 1897; that of the exports from 159 millions to 800 millions; and that of the transit trade from 76 millions to 358 millions.

To-day the shipping of Antwerp is accommodated by the well-nigh interminable quays on the river banks, and by the very numerous basins connected with the Scheldt by comparatively narrow waterways. Yet, extensive as this accommodation is, the growth of the shipping calls for more, and an ambitious scheme for providing this is being gradually carried out. The essential object of the plan is to correct the course of the river by giving it a new bed; this will be effected by

making a new cut, and parallel with it an immense new basin, with wet and dry docks. The result will be to give to the present quay, bordering the town for 5500 metres, a length of 13,800 metres ; while the quay accommodation of the basins will be nearly 47,000 metres.

Antwerp in general, like most other Belgian towns, is mainly composed of Flemish and French elements. But one has only to visit the region of the docks and quays, to notice the existence of a large alien population of very mixed composition. Certain streets are without a trace of Flemish or French. One discovers cafés inscribed "The Rose of England" or "The Jolly Boys," "Lille Norge," "Skandinavisch Kronan," "Chez Patri-nos" or the now ill-omened "Alte Deutschland"; not to mention signs in Hebrew and Japanese characters. One hears the babel of tongues, and the sound of oddly incongruous songs floats across the Scheldt. There are bars where whisky and Pilsener beer are the chief demand; and shops which live solely by supplying cosmopolitan mariners with what they need for their next voyage.

This intermixture of races at the port has doubtless modified the native Anversois. Yet it would be untrue to say that the latter no longer survives. His type still exists and is unmistakable. An environment of counting-houses and warehouses has made him principally a business man, and perhaps he is a little more brusque, a little less polite, than many of his fellow-countrymen. But he is a Fleming at heart. Domesticated by instinct, he likes his house to be the witness of his prosperity. He has not much time for modern movements in art and literature, but—with the reverence for antiquity that is innate in the Belgian character—he never tires of Rubens. He attends Mass at Notre Dame with regularity and punctuality, and goes home to the best dinner that his means can provide. His hospitality is proverbial—perhaps also a little ostentatious.

The greater part of Antwerp is entirely Flemish

in character. Although the French tongue is used by the commercial classes, one hears Flemish in the streets, and Flemish always in the poorer quarters, and often in the middle-class homes. The Grande Place and the Place Verte, in the heart of old Antwerp, the former with its old guild houses dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the latter with its Rubens statue and its magnificent view of the cathedral, are centres from which radiate innumerable quiet Flemish streets.

The new parts of Antwerp are more emblematic of the successful modern business man. The Avenue de Keyser, where there are immense hotels and gorgeous cafés in every style of past architecture, displays the lavishness that one would expect from wealth that is a little over-anxious to display itself. Nevertheless, some of these new palatial structures in Antwerp are very well done. The National Bank, for example, reproduces successfully the air of a château of the French Renaissance. The Theatre Flamand, again, and the new Museum of Paintings are dignified essays that reflect credit on their architects. The latter was built between 1879 and 1890. Its main façade and portico are a little over-weighted by the entablature to the latter, which is hardly compensated by the massiveness of the two piers ; the building is none the less creditable classicism.

Antwerp Cathedral is very typical of fifteenth century building ; its glory belongs to all Belgium. But Antwerp's greatest secular monument, the Musée Plantin, belongs very exclusively to Antwerp, and must be noticed here. It symbolises Antwerp's contribution to the world's literature ; for it was here that Master-printer Christopher Plantin set up his press in the later sixteenth century. Plantin did more than produce sumptuous editions ; it was to his efforts largely that an amazing impulse was given in his time to the school of Antwerp engravers. There was fine engraving being done in Antwerp before Rubens assumed the direction of it.

Plantin's successors were the Moretus family, a descendant of whom handed over the famous house to the town of Antwerp. The building occupies four sides of a quiet courtyard pleasantly laid out as a garden, and, except that the façades are modern, is practically as it was. Plantin's printing plant can be seen there, with the old presses, matrices, formes, chases, even proof-sheets just as they were left; many old and beautiful books, including the famous *Biblia Polyglotta*, and MSS. as old as the ninth century; portraits of famous artists, authors, commentators.

Antwerp were best left towards the evening, when the wild flames of the sunset from across the Scheldt flood the myriad gables and towers and spires with golden light. Bruges is best entered at twilight, or even in the dark, when the ugly evidences of modern utilities, which wrap the city round, are themselves obscured and rendered formless by the kindly shroud. Bruges railway station especially should be avoided, or passed through with half-closed eyes. Otherwise one's first impression of the town may be imperilled.

The medieval character of Bruges is preserved in its wide streets with low gabled houses, and in its art treasures. As regards the latter, the collection of paintings by Memling in the Hospital of St. John, including those on the famous Gothic reliquary, the Shrine of St. Ursula, would alone be worth a visit to the town. "A rich fund of life and grace is revealed in shapes of symmetrical proportions . . . nothing is more striking than the minuteness of the painter's touch, or the perfect mastery of his finish" (Crowe and Cavalcaselle). The "Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine" and some of Memling's finest portraits are also here.

The cathedral, although there are traces of twelfth-century work in its structure, is less remarkable for itself than for the paintings by Flemish masters it contains. Similarly the irregularity of Notre Dame—it illustrates practically all the periods of Gothic architecture—gives it the picturesqueness which is the most salient quality of its exterior; whereas the interior is

richly furnished with Italian and Flemish paintings and sculpture, including a very beautiful statue of the Virgin ascribed to Michael Angelo. Bruges appeals to us more eloquently through her civic monuments. overshadowing the Grand Place is the great fantastic belfry, here as elsewhere in Flanders the symbol of civic freedom. The belfry antedates the rest of the building—the *Halles*—having been erected after the fire of 1280 on the ruins of a former tower, where the assassins of Charles the Good were besieged, captured, and torn in pieces by the furious mob. The present tower took nearly a century to build. Square at the base, and octagonal in its upper part, the belfry shows the discreet ornament of the best Gothic period, and is associated with most of the heroic moments in Bruges' history. It was from its summit that the signal was sounded for the successful attack on the French garrison placed in the town by Philip the Good, and that the revolt against Maximilian was declared. To-day, a watchman still keeps guard—to warn the city of any outbreak of fire. To the watch-tower one ascends by 402 steps, and from the altitude of 350 feet one surveys the plain of Flanders, and the tortuous plan of the city stretched beneath.

The fourteenth-century Hôtel de Ville deserves attention; Bruges owes it to Louis de Maele, who laid the foundation stone in 1376. The dignified ogival windows, and the spires springing from the angles of the building, are perfect Middle Gothic; but the present-day sculpture that has replaced the medieval artist's work is very palpably modern. But, in truth, Bruges itself is its own best monument. Its most ordinary features are reminder enough of its past. In nearly every street is something worth investigation by the antiquary or artist. The Quai du Rosaire is famed for its medieval picturesqueness, and many of the other quays are bordered by houses which were the palaces of merchants in the days of the Hanseatic League, when the rich fabrics from the East came to Bruges, and wool from English herds to be woven into the famous Flemish broadcloths. The canals, not less than the quays, that wind through

the town are eloquent witness of the truth of the old sobriquet of Bruges : "the Venice of the North"; and equally eloquent reminder of the vast sea-borne trade that came to the town by way of Sluys. The great trading days of Bruges are past, but one of the modern trades of the quays is sufficiently interesting to merit passing attention. It consists of an outdoor market in old curiosities, gathered from dismantled houses, cottages, and odd corners of the town; in pottery, wood-work, armour, and the battered graven images of saints; in the pots and pans and other domestic utensils of yesterday; in old and modern books, curiously jumbled, as on the Paris quays. The sale of these wares is generally conducted by a type of shopman, not easily recognisable as a modern Fleming; Bruges produces commercial "characters" that seem to have stepped out of a picture by an old Flemish genre painter. Perhaps the environment of the old grey city is instrumental in helping such a type to survive.

The swans on the Bruges canals have their special story: they are kept there in expiation of a medieval crime. Pierre Lanchals, magistrate of the town, was cruelly done to death by the Brugeois on the occasion of their revolt against Maximilian; the maintenance of the swans in perpetuity—because the bird figured in the dead man's coat-of-arms—was the charge solemnly laid on the citizens by their victorious prince.

Bruges to-day is pre-eminently the city of Memling, Van Eyck, and many another Flemish artist and craftsman who made her beautiful. The town is a museum, but in the best sense of the term; a dead city where the past yet lives more vividly perhaps than in any other place in Belgium.

The fortunes of Bruges were in the olden times indissolubly connected with those of Ghent. The external prosperity of the one seems to have provoked the most warlike elements of the other, and a considerable portion of the history of the Middle Ages in Flanders is made up of sanguinary quarrels between these two. Ghent was a difficult problem from the first. The early settle-

ment was one of the last ramparts of paganism in Flanders. For long it was the despair of Christian missionaries ; and there is a legend that St. Amand, a pious and fervent preacher of the Faith, was ducked in the Scheldt as a result of his painstaking efforts. When, however, the Gantois had at last been converted, nothing could exceed their Christian zeal. Promptly they built two magnificent abbeys, dedicated respectively to St. Peter and St. Bavon, St. Amand himself being the founder of the first. The monasteries attracted residents, and the town grew ; but the townsmen, unlike those of many another place of monastic origin, did not wholly come under the domination of the monks. From the first there appears to have been an anti-clerical party in Ghent. So, in 1126, we find the town constituted a sort of self-governing republic, with rights and privileges very well protected against both the suzerain Count and the Abbeys.

In the beginning it was an aristocratic republic, but as population and industries developed, popular institutions crept in. But the burghers did not become less bellicose on that account. It merely meant that to their quarrels with other towns and with sovereign lords were added quarrels among themselves. A measure of the rough spirit of the Gantois is preserved to-day in the social organism of the old town. They no longer massacre one another, but they maintain class distinctions with a scrupulousness that savours of primeval fierceness. The social hierarchy of Ghent does not content itself with mere political divisions ; outside the main groups of Liberals and Catholics there are many minor groups. A number of the old families have united in a kind of association with headquarters in a beautiful eighteenth-century building in the Place d'Armes. The rich bourgeoisie have a choice of two societies, the older being the "Casino" and the younger the "Cercle artistique et littéraire." Then there is the world of professors entrenched at the University, and the well-known working-class organisation, the Vooruit. The last has contributed enormously to the improvement in the lot

of the humbler Gantois employed in this industrial town—for this is what Ghent has now become—and there are thousands of these in its linen-factory alone.

The modern population of Ghent is about 200,000 ; the same as that of Bruges in the Middle Ages, whereas that of modern Bruges is only a quarter of this total. Besides this turning of the tables, Ghent has progressed in the approved modern way. The city has substituted wide, airy streets and new houses for the old tortuous alleys and hovels. In its suburbs a truly modern uniformity prevails. These consist of main streets bordered by low houses, small shops, humble cabarets ; of side streets with blocks of flats, all of the same proportions and the same pattern. This is where the working classes live, and there is sufficient contrast between the drab sameness of their modest dwellings, and the pretentious splendours of the houses of the well-to-do, to remind one of the social conditions which provoked so much inter-class hatred in the medieval town.

East of the town, and quite near the Scheldt, stand the ruins of the Abbey of St. Bavon. The site is charmingly peaceful ; ivy grows on the battered walls, and in summer the rich green foliage of ancient trees blends pleasantly with the stone. The Cathedral of St. Bavon is some little distance to the west. It was begun towards the end of the thirteenth century, and was formerly dedicated to St. John. Charles V rebaptized it, at the same time as he suppressed the wealthy abbey to the east.

The exterior of the church is of brick and stone, cleverly intermingled to give a picturesque effect, and its proportions are good ; otherwise it exhibits no striking features of design or ornament. Naturally, it abounds with interesting works of art, first in importance being the famous “Adoration of the Lamb,” by Jan and Hubert van Eyck ; a polyptych that expresses more eloquently than any other of the time the Christian ideal of the fifteenth century.

Only the central panels remain to Ghent.<sup>1</sup> The com-

<sup>1</sup> These are reported to have been recently removed by the German invaders to Berlin.

plete picture, after many previous vicissitudes, was taken to Paris in 1794, where it was dismembered ; only the above-mentioned panels being ultimately restored to the cathedral at Ghent in 1815. The greater part of the side shutters were sold to a dealer, who disposed of them to the Berlin Gallery, where at the time of writing they are housed. The two famous panels of Adam and Eve found their way back to Ghent, but not to the cathedral ; they disappeared till 1862, when a French connoisseur, passing through Ghent, discovered them in a lumber-room. Since 1881 they have been in the Brussels Museum.

A little north-west of the cathedral, the great tower of the belfry rears its modern iron steeple. The tower was begun in 1183, but the original design was never completed, and the metal spire, added in 1839, robs the belfry of much of its architectural interest. It retains its peals of bells. One of the oldest and heaviest of these bore the following inscription in Flemish : " My name is Roland ; when I am rung hastily, then there is a fire ; when I resound in peals, then there is a victory in Flanders."

The Hôtel de Ville, occupying the corner of the market-place and the Rue des Grainiers, really consists of two quite distinct parts. The north façade, very ably restored by the famous French architect Viollet-le-Duc and Pauli in 1870, is one of the most beautiful pieces of Flamboyant Gothic in Belgium ; but the east of the building is a very second-rate specimen of Renaissance work. The first-named was designed by Dominique de Waghemaer and Rombout Keldermans.

Ghent, like Bruges, possesses a Béguinage or nunnery. It was founded in the thirteenth century, and was dedicated to St. Elizabeth. Originally, the Béguinage stood near the old Porte de Bruges, whence it was transferred to its present site in the north-east of the town in 1874. These modest Gothic houses are picturesque and attractive ; an avenue of tall trees to the entrance emphasizes their secluded character, and they are surrounded by pleasant gardens. The inmates,

about 700 in number, are largely employed in the making of lace. There is a "Petit Béguinage" also, in the Rue des Violettes, where about half the number of nuns are accommodated.

Of great interest is the old chateau of the Counts of Flanders, which is as old as the Abbey of St. Bavon's. Largely added to at the end of the twelfth century, it served for long as the citadel of the counts against the refractory Gantois. Here it was that, in 1339, Jacques van Artevelde received a state visit from King Edward III, whom he had proposed to make Count of Flanders. The Gantois, by the way, commemorate the Flemish patriot by an impressive statue in the Marché du Vendredi ; just as they have preserved in the same place a relic of their own tempestuous turbulence : a huge cannon, the "Dulle Griete," fashioned in the fifteenth century.

Approached by a gateway between two octagonal towers, the chateau is almost entirely surrounded by water. In 1780 it was sold, and converted into a factory ; but more recently it has been very cleverly restored to its former appearance by M. J. de Waele, and the corrosion of the stone walls by a damp climate has already sufficed to give to the restored parts a respectable air of antiquity. Of the original structure there remain the old donjon or keep, and a fine Romanesque arcade.

Ypres is the last of the famous thirteenth-century Flemish trinity. Its decline was, if possible, more complete than that of either Bruges or Ghent ; from a total of 200,000 in the days of its prosperity, the population had fallen to a beggarly 15,000 by the end of the fifteenth century, and by the end of the seventeenth to 5000. Nor has it, like Ghent, experienced a modern revival. Instead of the 4000 cloth looms that once made this industry famous, a modern manufacture of lace occupies, not too strenuously, the energies of its working-class inhabitants. For three-quarters of the sixteenth century it was held by the French, who left their mark upon its manners. The life of the town is centred in the Grande Place, famous for its thirteenth-century Halles des Drapiers, and for its Hôtel de Ville.

In the rear of these buildings stands the cathedral church of St. Martin, possessing a very beautiful rose window, but not otherwise of conspicuous interest. One must not forget the Musée Merghelynck at the corner of the Rue de Lille and the Rue des Frippiers. It is a late eighteenth-century house fitted up by the great-grandson of the original owner with antique furniture and some quaint relics of the latter. The building has been bequeathed to the Belgian Academy.

Liége and Mons are the two great centres of Walloon industrialism, the first being identified with the production of iron and steel goods, and the second with the coal industry of the Borinage. Liége is situated on both banks of the river Meuse, at its junction with the Ourthe. The principal part of the town lies on the left bank, the right bank consisting mainly of factories and working-class houses ; but its industrial suburbs extend far down and up the stream—it is, in fact, one of the towns with far-spreading tentacles of which Verhaeren has written. The wealth of the city is expressed in fine modern boulevards and beautiful public gardens : a reminder that in the midst of a teeming industrial population, engaged in the deadly struggle for bare life, there exists a great town of eminently aristocratic aspect and hardly troubled serenity.

Legend says that Saint Monulphus, Archbishop of Maestricht, visited the site of Liége in 578, and was so impressed by its natural beauties that he built an oratory on the spot and foretold the great city that was to arise. Later, the tower of St. Lambert, the Martyr, was transferred to this spot, and to his blessed memory a humble village was built here at the beginning of the eighth century. These monkish tales, if they are lacking in historical value, at least help to fix the character of the town's origin as ecclesiastical.

At the beginning of the eleventh century, the place possessed a cathedral, seven collegiate churches, and two great monasteries. One archbishop fortified it with walls, another built a stone bridge across the river. As an educational centre it became renowned, and as an

important ecclesiastical headquarters it attracted a distinguished group of Church dignitaries, diplomatists, and knights. It was thus a town of considerable ecclesiastical and intellectual importance, before the mineral wealth of the province had been realised.

Behind the Churchmen stood the emperors, and St. Lambert's Cathedral was the result of the latter's munificence. However, as the priesthood grew in power and magnificence, the democratic opposition to it grew likewise. The lines of the struggle between these two are long and tortuous, but a definite victory was gained for the people by the Peace of Fextre, concluded in 1316. By this Peace the archbishop undertook to govern according to the sense of the country, that is to say, according to the public will as represented by the vote of every class of the population whose delegates constituted the Assembly. The provisions, however, were too vague to be wholly satisfactory, and for many years afterwards intermittent quarrels broke out between the parties. Yet the evolution of democratic government progressed.

When Margaret de Valois visited the town in 1577, she found it very well built, with wide streets, fine *Places* with beautiful fountains, churches rich with marble. Such was the result of a century of peace. Towards the end of the fourteenth century Liége had discovered the rich coal measures in its vicinity, and about the same time the manufacture of armour had acquired some importance. Both these industries were checked by the internal troubles of the fifteenth century, but when peace was once secured, both—especially the coal industry—made very rapid strides.

A tight hold was kept on its new prosperity. For the most part, Liége lived peaceably with the rest of the world until 1789, when its innate republicanism, stirred by the events in France, had to be repressed by an Austrian army. The French occupation was hailed with joy, and the Dutch accepted with an ill grace; while the Revolution of 1830 found the Liégeois eager for the national cause of Belgium, notwithstanding the fact

that the foundation of its vast metallurgical industry at Seraing was largely due to the unstinted support of King William.

In the early days of the sixteenth century Cardinal Everard de la Marck, the episcopal ruler of the principality, erected as his headquarters the great building now known as the Palais de Justice. The whole structure has been much "restored" since then; there remains, however, a good deal of the original late Gothic work, much of which, despite its obvious architectural vices, is exceedingly attractive. The sculptured columns of the inner arcades, whatever may be their measure of structural rightness, are rich in inventive fancy, and the ribs of the vaulting stretch from capital to capital in a graceful network of curved lines.

The eighteenth-century Hôtel de Ville in the Great Market Place is conspicuous only by its bulk. Liège boasts of several old churches which, in spite of—in nearly every case—extensive restorations, are of very great interest. True, the great church of St. Lambert, where Peter the Hermit preached the Crusade, has altogether disappeared, a victim to the French Revolution; but there remain St. Jacques, founded by Archbishop Baudy in 1016, but now scarcely recognisable as a Romanesque structure on account of the late Gothic dress which its sixteenth-century restorers put upon it; St. Paul's, a thirteenth-century Gothic church, which since the destruction of St. Lambert's has ranked as the cathedral; and St. Martin's, reconstructed at the beginning of the sixteenth century on the ruins of a much older church, memorable for a tragedy of 1312, when two hundred nobles, seeking sanctuary here from the violence of the mob, perished miserably in the flames that consumed the structure. There is also Saint Bartholomew, a Romanesque basilica completely transformed by eighteenth-century restorers.

Of the secular buildings the Neo-Renaissance University is of less importance architecturally than as an educational centre. Attached to it are a School of Mines and Arts and Manufactures and a School of Electrical Science.

Mons, the capital of Hainaut, and the centre of the mining district of the Borinage, claims its origin in a fortress said to have been built here by Cæsar in the Gallic Wars. One may at least affirm that its beginnings were something of the kind, and passing to the actual record of history assume its early importance from the fact that Charlemagne made the place the centre of an administrative division. Later, we learn of Mons receiving charters and developing its cloth-making ; also of its suffering, in common with the other Flemish towns, the occasional penalty of a siege or an assault. But the town was ruined by Alva's persecution, and from this time up to the early part of the nineteenth century, Mons was only a fortified place with which contending monarchs and generals played battledore and shuttlecock.

Although the capital of a great industrial district, Mons can hardly be called an industrial town. The property owners and the social class who comprise the wealthier section of its population are not distinctively concerned with collieries. There is, moreover, a powerful leavening of intellectuals, and its educational establishments give Mons almost the character of a university town. Besides the School of Mines—which furnishes a great part of Belgium with mining engineers—there is an important higher industrial school ; also an “Institut commercial des industriels du Hainaut,” founded in 1901, and magnificently equipped by M. Raoul Warocqué. A syndicate of employers is responsible for its maintenance. These institutions send forth to Belgium and the outside world a steady stream of experts fitted to become leaders of their industries, and every year they attract to Mons a little world of scholars from outside, who contribute to the quickening of the town's intellectual life. Mons, in short, is the brain rather than the embodiment of the Borinage.

Of the fortified chateau that once crowned the higher ground of Mons, there remain some towers to give interest to the public promenade, which, as in Namur, is the modern contribution to this commanding position.

Close by stands the belfry, its seventeenth-century classicism being in sharp contrast to the architectural style of most Belgian belfries. The Cathedral of St. Waltrudir occupies a site lower down the hill. It is in its origin a fifteenth-century church, not improbably designed by Mathieu de Layens, the architect of the Louvain Hôtel de Ville. It lacks the great tower which was to have completed the design; and it has little of the gracious characteristics of fifteenth-century Gothic, being in its complete state a late sixteenth-century building. A certain austerity in its external decoration, a certain reserve in its "Pointed," distinguish it from the majority of Late Gothic churches, and within, its fine nave and vault—the decoration of the latter has escaped being smothered with whitewash and plaster—emphasize the general air of dignified simplicity.

The centre of the town is the Grande Place, and on one side of its vast area stands the fifteenth-century Hôtel de Ville. The façade is incomplete, but of considerable beauty and architectural interest; but the fantastic tower of a later period is Baroque at its ugliest.

Namur, the capital of the province of that name, is situated at the junction of the Sambre and the Meuse. Its importance as a strategic point was early recognised, and Brialmont's scheme of fortification, by which Namur became in the nineteenth century a strong link in the defensive chain along the Meuse, was merely the completion of the work done here by previous military engineers. The fortress has always been curiously apart from the town. History shows that the people of Namur regarded the coming and going of conquering armies, if not with equanimity, at any rate with a patience bordering on indifference. Much occupied with their own non-military affairs, they accepted Louis XIV, William of Orange, the Elector of Bavaria, and other foreign leaders with resignation, only hoping that these great warriors would soon allow them to get on with the ordinary business of life. The spectacle of a great military fortress incapable of communicating its spirit, or any part of it, to the civil population it

protected is certainly rare in the history of Belgian towns.

What is left of the old buildings of Namur is not specially interesting. On the other hand, the streets are picturesque enough, and from the citadel heights one gets a magnificent view of the town and the surrounding country.

Cutlery is made at Namur, but apart from that it is not an "industrial" town. For this reason, one misses the sharp contrast between the poor working population and the rich bourgeoisie which is characteristic of latter-day industrialism. The Namurois are largely artisans, with enough to live on, and a disposition to make the best of their lot ; hence a pleasant air of bustling gaiety that pervades the streets. Then there are the old-established families of the province, the public officials, and the officers of the garrison—this last an important feature of Namur—who constitute the "society" world. Namur abounds in associations of various kinds, particularly musical societies, for the people, high and low, are extremely musical. The best known of the latter is the Société de Moncrebeau, which exists for promoting not only the love of music but also the taste for popular poetry. Under the auspices of this society, which was founded in 1843, a school of local poets arose, some of whose music has penetrated far and wide. One may instance Bosret, Wérotte and Julian Colson.

A group of towns, all famous in history, but of no great social or economic importance at the present day, must be dealt with briefly. Charleroi is complementary to Mons—a centre of the coal industry, modernised beyond knowledge.

It has been claimed that Tournai is the most ancient town in Belgium. One knows that it was an important town in Roman days ; that, with Tongres, it was a halting-place for the legions marching from the Seine valley to the Rhine ; and that it was probably also of some commercial standing. In the fifth century it was the headquarters of the Merovingian kings ; after their

departure it suffered a period of obscurity, and ultimately came under the protection of France. The heroic and romantic defence of the town against Alexander of Parma in 1581, by the Princess d'Epinoy, is one of the most notable exploits in its annals.

The site occupies both banks of the Scheldt, and the town is the most important in Hainaut. Its belfry dates from 1187 ; the Hôtel de Ville is a medieval building that was once the Priory of St. Martin ; there is an interesting early eighteenth-century Cloth Hall. Part of the ancient ramparts remain. But the chief pride of Tournai is the cathedral, a vast Romanesque basilica occupying the centre of the town. The "Pointed" features of its architecture, such as the Gothic choir, consecrated in 1338, blend in a singular harmony with the original style of the structure. The cathedral dates from 1146, when the nave was built ; but this was not vaulted till the eighteenth century. The building is cruciform, with an ambulatory, and radiating chapels, and is surmounted by five towers above the cross, and two turrets at the angles of the north façade.

While Hasselt is the nominal capital of the province of Belgian Limbourg, Tongres, which lies about midway between that town and Liège, is the more interesting of the two towns. Tongres possesses a great monument in its cathedral and cloister. The original structure of the cathedral was finished at the beginning of the ninth century, but was wrecked by the Normans, and after being rebuilt, was again destroyed by the Comte de Looz in 1170. The present church dates from the first half of the thirteenth century, but the tower and apse belong to the fifteenth century. The tower is 74 metres in height, massive in proportion, and is supported at its angles by flying buttresses, of decorative but solid design, and is pierced by three tiers of pointed windows. Within, the Early Gothic of the nave and the right transept combines very happily with the fifteenth-century manner shown in the left transept and the chapels adjoining it. The colour and lighting of the interior is exceptionally fine and impressive.

The old Porte de Visé brings back medieval memories, and the bustling activity of the cattle-market reminds us that Tongres plays its modest part in the modern agricultural industry.

Courtrai is the centre and market for table-linen and lace. Like most of the Flemish towns, it has witnessed stirring times. When in the fourteenth century the men of Bruges headed a democratic insurrection against the French king, Philip the Fair, Courtrai joined with Ypres and most of Flanders in their support. At Groningen, in the neighbourhood of Courtrai, was fought the sanguinary battle that gave them victory. The Flemish army did not spare its adversary, and many a royalist knight's golden spur was hung on the arches of St. Martin's church ; hence the name : "The Battle of the Golden Spurs." It is commemorated by a modern monument. The Hôtel de Ville dates from the sixteenth century, and in the centre of the Grande Place a solitary Flemish belfry rears its head. Except for a few old-world corners, there are few other traces of old Courtrai. The modern town has waxed fat and prosperous by its industry, and insists upon its hygienic comforts.

Louvain and Malines may be taken together. Louvain is only four leagues from Brussels, but in the order of time the interval between the two towns is more than four centuries. The "intellectual capital" of Belgium, the seat of a famous university, is a city of the Middle Ages—perhaps one should say *was*, for the German invasion of 1914 wrought such widespread havoc that the town will have to be largely rebuilt, and one may look for some modernisation of its character. In the sack of the town, on August 26, 1914, several notable monuments perished. The fifteenth-century church of St. Pierre, famous for its tabernacle and an elaborate Jubé or rood loft, was ruined by shot and shell. The university buildings were also seriously injured, the library, with its priceless collection of books and MSS., being wholly destroyed. The Late Gothic Town Hall behind them appears to have escaped ; very fortunately, for it was the masterpiece of Mathieu de Layens, the

master builder of Louvain and the architect of the Bruges Hôtel de Ville.

The sadness of it all is not lessened by the fact that the city had passed her day of greatest material prosperity, and lived mainly by and for her university. The university was founded by Count John II in 1426, in the hope of restoring Louvain's prosperity, lost by the emigration of the cloth weavers at the end of the fourteenth century. It developed rapidly ; at the end of the sixteenth century, when the famous professor, Justus Lipsius, taught here, there were fifty-two colleges and 6000 students within its jurisdiction. In 1679 a notable addition to its buildings was made ; the Halles, a warehouse built for the Cloth-makers' Guild in 1317, was taken over and enlarged by the addition of an upper story. Its arched and pillared vestibule is an interesting remnant of the early fourteenth century.

In recent times Louvain University has supplied much of the *personnel* in the political and administrative life of Belgium. The spirit of its teaching is distinctive, as compared with that given at Brussels and Ghent ; there is less philosophical speculation at Louvain, where the dogma of the Catholic Church is particularly strong. Scientific study is restricted from the same cause. On the other hand, the university is largely the nursery of modern Belgian literature. It was from Louvain that the "movement" of 1880 emanated, and in the students' journals that such writers as Emile Verhaeren, Albert Giraud, Max Waller, and Emile van Arenbergh made their *début*.

It is probable that Malines, the "spiritual capital" of Belgium—as Louvain is the intellectual capital—was first ceded to the Bishops of Liège by Charles the Simple in 910. The money of rich pilgrims, journeying to the shrine of St. Rombaut, helped the little hamlet on the road to prosperity, and by 1300 it had been found worth while to surround it with walls. The humble villager of St. Rombaut was beginning to be a person of some account.

In 1342 a fire wrought havoc among the monasteries,

chapels, and houses. Even the Cathedral of St. Rombaut was hardly spared. But the citizens were equal to the emergency. They rebuilt the cathedral ; they erected the great gates of the city, of which only the Porte de Bruxelles now remains. Further progress in prosperity was made in the fifteenth century, when the reigning Duke of Burgundy made of it a sort of capital for the administration of his territories. Charles the Bold instituted a Parliament at Malines ; the old Parliament House still stands ; and this fact probably induced Margaret of Austria, when she became Governor-general of the Netherlands in 1493, to take up her residence here. A second fire, more disastrous than the first, took place in 1546 ; and after the death of Mary of Hungary, Malines was forsaken by the Governors-general in favour of Brussels. Little by little the old capital sank into oblivion. By the seventeenth century it had become a town of the second rank, and it is only since 1830 that it has recovered a little of its former life of activity. To-day it is still the spiritual capital, and possesses a modest trade in lace, furniture, sweetmeats, and beer.

Fitly, the greatest of the ancient monuments of the spiritual capital is the Cathedral of St. Rombaut. The old writers say that the original church was finished in 1312, and that the existing structure dates from shortly after the fire of 1342, but the architectural evidence points to a later date for the latter. St. Rombaut's, in fact, is a typical fifteenth-century church. The colossal tower at the west end is 350 feet high, and is a landmark for the country around. According to the original plan a steeple was to have been added to this tower, which would have made the total altitude over 600 feet. This, however, was never carried out. As it is, this sufficiently high and massive feature is symbolical of the dominating and protective influence of the Catholic Church over the city. There is, or was before the German bombardment of 1914, a quantity of stained glass, modern but very good. Most of this was shattered by German shells. The Gothic tracery shared the same fate, and the wooden carved pulpit, by the eighteenth-

century sculptor, Boeckshuyns, was badly mutilated. The *Halles*, the ancient Hôtel de Ville, and the Courts of Justice, formerly the palace of Margaret of Austria, are only a memory for the same reason.

In the few Belgian seaside towns, old and new commingle curiously. Ostend, of course, is the most famous of these, and the most familiar to the world in general. The late King Leopold, whose particular preserve it was, took care that it should be so ; the summer splendour of its *digue* and Kursaal is mainly his handiwork ; he found Ostend profitable for his pocket, and convenient for the indulgence of those cosmopolitan pleasures which lend the place an attractive odour of naughtiness. It was an unconsciously humorous lady who remarked that a day at Ostend was a "liberal" education. Blankenberge, 13 miles out of Ostend, is the latter in little. Heyst and Knocke are less "smart," if not more informal than either of these. Nieuport and La Panne, Westende, Middelkerke, Mariakerke, all have something of historical association, and all have been developed on modern patterns to meet the needs of the great concourse of summer visitors. Great it is, for the hosts of Europe come to the Belgian coast at holiday time in search of the recuperation that its sea breezes guarantee.

## THE COUNTRY

A modern writer has remarked of Belgium that there is no genuine country life at all ; that the latter is merely a repetition of town life. The Belgian is, it is said, essentially a man of the town, and regards the countryside as a recreation ground where he may pass the pleasant summer months. Since considerably more than half the population reside outside the towns, and are engaged on the cultivation of the soil, either as proprietors or tenant farmers, the above statement is calculated to give a distorted impression of Belgian country life. True, there are the rich manufacturers

and shopkeepers who pepper the valleys of La Roche or the Vesdre or the Amblève with pretentious modern *maisons de campagne*; there is also in the Walloon provinces a *petite noblesse*, too poor to reside in town, too proud to dig in the fields. But both these classes are excrescences on the rural life of the community, nor are they peculiar to Belgium.

The outstanding feature of rural Belgium is the subdivision of the land into small holdings. In East and West Flanders, Brabant, and Hainaut, the population is extremely dense, and the whole area is an agglomeration of small farms and cottages—excepting, of course, the mining district of Hainaut, which has its own physical characteristics. In the two Flanders, which produce more than half the total crops of the country, the large landed proprietor is the exception, the peasant proprietor or tenant of anything up to five acres the rule. In the last fifty years the number of small holdings has increased by nearly 50 per cent., and it is interesting to note that the holdings of under  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres increased by over 70 per cent., and the larger ones only by 12 per cent. The average size of Belgian small holdings is the smallest in the world.

The causes contributing to this result are various. The first is the Belgian law of succession, which ordains the equal division of real estate among the children of a landed proprietor. The second is the perfection of the Belgian system of roads and railways, especially of light railways, and the cheapness of the fares, enabling the town workman to travel comparatively long distances, and thereby combine his ordinary work with the cultivation of the plot of ground where he has his home. In 1911 there were altogether 25,446 miles of roads, of which 5073 were State roads. North of the Meuse the roads are mainly paved; but in Luxembourg and Namur they are mostly macadamised. The railway statistics for 1912 show a total of 5401 miles of lines, of which about 2500 are light railways. With the exception of 215 miles or so the railways are State-owned, and are managed less with a view to securing

revenue than with the desire to confer the maximum benefit on the country they serve. The third-class passenger rate is about a halfpenny per mile, and both season tickets and working-class tickets are much cheaper in proportion. The workman can travel  $12\frac{1}{2}$  miles (each way) for 1s.  $2\frac{1}{2}d.$  a week. Freight charges, too, have been reduced, mainly in the interest of the small holder, to a ridiculously low figure. A can of milk weighing 22 lbs. can be sent 31 miles for a penny, and  $93\frac{1}{2}$  miles for 2d. The minimum charge on the English railways is 6d., and 22 lbs. for 31 miles would cost 9d.

These two factors, then, the law of succession and the excellence and cheapness of transport, have greatly fostered the small-holding movement. There are other reasons for its success, such as the natural willingness to work and thriftiness of the Flemish peasant, and the discovery of the possibilities in the way of intensive culture. But inasmuch as small holdings are impracticable without means of cheap and easy transit, indispensable for marketing the produce, one may readily acknowledge that the railway facilities afforded by the Belgian Government have done more than anything else to stimulate this industry. The price of land varies enormously in different parts of Belgium, and a small holder may have to travel far for a plot which suits his purse, and the wise forethought of his rulers enables him to do so, whether by railways or by light railways—which, by the way, are really “light” in construction, being little more than glorified tramways laid along the sides of the roads.

Some distinction must be drawn between the Flemish peasant proprietor or tenant and the Walloon. The Fleming works hard and lives thriftily, supplementing the produce of his farm with pigs and poultry. The Walloon is said not to work so hard, nor to provide so conscientiously for the future; and there are external differences in the farms of the respective districts which point to the existence of different ideas and ideals. The Walloon houses are generally built of local stone

and roofed with slates, whereas those of Flanders are mostly of brick covered with yellow stucco. The materials in each case may be due to local considerations, but the comparison helps to suggest that the Walloon expects a higher standard of physical comfort. In Flanders the cottages are scattered along the high road, and all over the country ; in Wallonia the inhabitants congregate in small villages, and between these there is hardly a cottage to be seen. Herein is a very well-marked distinction between each race's social habits. Broadly speaking, it is the Flemish provinces that have taken the lead in the small-holding movement.

Belgian agriculture is extraordinarily intensive. As a result, a comparison of the yield per acre of different crops produced by the European countries shows that she heads the list in every instance, except that of wheat. Even with regard to the last, the yields in certain communes have been as high as 57 bushels to the acre ; but the average yield for the whole country is only 34 bushels. American and Russian competition has done a good deal in recent times to deter cultivators from the exclusive cultivation of wheat, and beet and potatoes now occupy a large share of their attention. Between 1846 and 1895 the number of hectares under cereal crops, calculated as per 100 inhabitants, fell from 100 to 65. On the other hand, the cultivation of the sugar beet in the same years increased from 2126 hectares to 54,100 hectares, and that of the potato from 115,620 hectares to 184,690 hectares. One result of this increased production is the large number of refineries and distilleries that have come into being in this part of the country. In this way agriculture and "industry" are linked together.

Belgian ascendancy in live-stock, calculated on the basis of so many to the square mile, is hardly less marked, though she is below Denmark in the matter of horses, and below Great Britain, France, Denmark, and Germany in that of sheep. Indeed the number of sheep per square mile is to-day smaller than it was in 1846. The number

of horses has also diminished, but the quality of the animals has vastly improved.

The extension of market gardening has been a natural development of the small-holding system. Vast areas of glass-houses, owned by many different proprietors, are in some districts a feature of the Belgian plains, and the intensive cultivation of outdoor fruit and vegetables has grown enormously of late years. This particular branch of farming not only supplies the Belgian people with its produce, but contrives to export annually £230,000 worth more of vegetables and £480,000 worth more of fruit than Belgium imports. If market gardening was a development of the small-holding system, it was a corollary of the decline in wheat growing, thanks to foreign competition, and of the discovery that root crops, such as beet and potatoes, paid better than cereals. Another factor must be considered—the small holder's economic position. Doubtless it has been the dream of Belgian social reformers to see the soil of the countryside tilled by a race of peasant proprietors. In point of fact, the proportion of peasant proprietors to peasant tenants was greater thirty years ago than it is to-day. Cultivable land has been divided and divided again until there are more purchasable plots than ever before. On the other hand, this land has increased enormously in price, and the average peasant farmer can rarely find the means to purchase outright, or even on mortgage. Consequently he is compelled to rent his plot. It must be admitted that he does not do this under the most favourable conditions. The long lease is almost a thing of the past. A fairly long lease may still be obtained in some of the remoter and less productive districts, but generally leases tend to become shorter and shorter. It is a hardship, too, that the law of the land allows him nothing for his improvements. In certain cases he can, in fact, be penalised for making them. Mr. Seebohm Rowntree, in his very interesting book, *Land and Labour : Lessons from Belgium*, tells us that in some parts of the country the payment by the incoming tenant for certain improve-

ments is more or less enforced by public opinion. He tells the story of a farmer who stood by the letter of the law, refused to pay, and duly entered into possession. The next morning he awoke to find that a field of his finest crops had been as ruthlessly devastated as if an invading army had passed over it, with plenty of heavy artillery. Circumstantial evidence pointed to the mischief having been done by teams—good teams too—of horses and ploughs ; but he could not find out, and nobody would say, to whom these belonged. They could only have belonged to several neighbouring peasant farmers, but there was no means of identifying them.

The existence of this “custom” in farming communities suggests that a formal rectification of the law is rather urgently called for. As things are at present, the Belgian farmer has to make the best of a hard job—the best, that is, for himself. Naturally, he enters into his temporary possession with the resolve to get the last ounce of value out of it within the prescribed time. He does not cultivate for posterity, but for his immediate profit. Highly intensive culture is his recipe. Now, intensive culture can be carried too far, as easily as not far enough ; it can be carried to the point of exhausting the ground. The peasant tenant does not, in many instances, care whether he exhausts the ground or not, so long as the process is not accomplished within his own time. Herein may lie the seeds of a future agrarian problem for Belgium, unless the law of landlord and tenant is attended to.

The excellence of the Belgian system of agricultural education helps the farmer to get the utmost out of his land. He is now quickly taught to appreciate scientific methods which his ancestors, of two or three generations back, were unable or unwilling to comprehend. There was a bad period for Belgian farming towards the end of the eighteenth century, and for the first part of the nineteenth. This was largely due to the innate conservatism of the farmers. They refused to abandon their old methods of culture, which time and the increase of knowledge had rendered obsolete ; there was the

greatest difficulty in the world in persuading them to adopt chemical manures. At last the Government took the matter in hand, and in 1849 Charles Rogier, Minister of the Interior, was instrumental in founding a number of schools of agriculture. At first the experiment was a failure. No students came to the schools. But the effort sufficed to accustom the people to the idea of agricultural education, and prepared the way for the measure of 1860, by which the teaching of agriculture was completely reorganised. To-day there is at Gembloux an Institute of Agriculture, at Brussels a School of Veterinary Medicine, and there are two schools of practical horticulture, the one at Ghent and the other at Vilworde.

At the Institute at Gembloux, one of the best of its kind, the teaching is both theoretical and practical. The students are at first instructed in the science of the subject, after which they are employed in practical work on a model farm attached to the Institute, consisting of 70 hectares of cultivated land. The usual course lasts three years, and as a rule the student leaves the school with the organisation and management of a farm at his finger ends. For some years, however, there has been a fourth year of study for those who desire to specialise in one branch of the subject or the other.

A new impulse was given to agricultural teaching in 1885 by the establishment of a body of Government Agriculturists, with functions similar to those of the British Board of Agriculture, but with different and much more personal methods of administration. The British Board of Agriculture does excellent work by means of leaflets and lectures. But the leaflet is not as efficacious in the farming class as the spoken word, and even the spoken word—as uttered by the official lecturer—does not travel very far. There is very little intimacy between the authorities and the farmers in this country ; we have heard of no instances of friendly gossip in the tavern parlour between the official and his audience. The Belgian official, the *agronome*, is, from

authentic accounts, a more social character, and spreads his good seed in a circle where he is always remembered and generally liked. The fruit is not improbably more abundant on that account.

## INDUSTRIES AND MANUFACTURES

The statistics of 1912 inform us that the total value of Belgium's imports in that year was 4,798,472,000 francs, and that of her exports 3,867,579,000 francs. The value of the exports from Belgium to the United Kingdom amounted to £23,385,000. The figures, besides giving one a notion of the total volume of trade, suggest the importance of Belgium as an industrial and manufacturing country. On previous pages we have seen something of the methods whereby the soil has been made to yield its produce. In this, an attempt is made to review briefly its producing capacity in other directions.

A main source of wealth is the coal-mining industry. The great mining districts of Belgium are those of Southern Hainaut and the province of Liége. The former, known as the Borinage, is the more important of the two. It employs considerably more than 100,000 miners. The mines are owned and worked by joint-stock companies. The mines in the Liége district are less extensive than the Borinage. In 1909, however, a new coal-field in the Campine district of Limbourg began to be worked, and it is expected that these new mines will overshadow both Liége and Hainaut, and open up a fresh avenue of prosperity for the country.

In 1908 the total output for Belgium of coal amounted to 23,557,900 tons, the average price realised being 16·14 fr. per ton. Since 1890 the increase has only been some 3,000,000 tons; this is due to new laws restricting the output. The average wages earned by each miner (including women and children) are more than 20 per cent. greater than in 1905. But the profit to the mine-

owners increased during the same period from eightpence per ton of output to fourteen pence, thanks to the increased price paid for coal. In 1908 the grand total of coal-miners of both sexes was 145,280, classified as follows : working under ground—99,092 men, 8 women, and 6653 boys ; working above ground—27,924 men, 5083 women, 3481 boys and 3039 girls. The totals of women and girls reveal the operation of a beneficent reform in regard to working underground. In 1880 the underground women-workers numbered 4714 ; in 1908, 8 ; while the number of girls similarly employed was 3260 in the former year. Since 1890 no girls have been employed underground. There is, however, still room for improvement in the regulations affecting the employment of woman and child labour on the mines, and the social condition of the Borinage loudly calls for it. The district is the least pleasant to visit of any in Belgium ; and that not only because the countryside is blackened by grime, and the air polluted by the fumes of coal gas. For the population of the Borinage is a race apart from other sections of the Belgian community—a race stunted in its stature, and unpleasing to look upon ; many men less than five feet in height, and women shorter still. Unhealthy and unceasing labour in the mines in the earlier part of the last century, when capital had no higher aim than the merciless exploitation of the working man, has produced this type in the present generation. Nor is the mining population ill favoured only as regards their appearance. Their intelligence and morality are lower than those of any other section in Belgium. For centuries the education of these people was neglected, and though education has become compulsory, and the conditions of woman- and child-labour have been greatly ameliorated, their backwardness is still a matter of concern to the social reformer. Drunkenness, immorality, and ignorance are the worst charges made against the mining class. Belgium has the reputation of consuming more alcohol per head of the population than any other European country, and the miners of the Borinage assist very materially to maintain this reputation. The great

Socialist organisations have begun to take the matter in hand, but the task before them is a vast one, and the presence in the mining district of Socialistic *cercles* has not greatly diminished the numbers of *cabarets* and *estaminets*, where misery can be temporarily drowned in gin, or schnick, or *faro* beer. Child marriages are common. A woman's lapse from virtue is no social sin ; indeed it is often her recommendation as a wife, since an illegitimate child who can work is useful as a contributor to the household expenses. This easy morality exists, of course, in many English villages and other parts of the globe. Its presence in the Borinage, however, takes on a more lurid colour from the fact that there it is associated with so many other forms of vice.

The coal-mines in the province of Liége are largely bound up with the great metallurgic industry carried on at Liége, Seraing, and neighbouring towns.

Belgium's other mineral resources have not fulfilled their earlier promise. The iron-fields of *Entre-Sambre-et-Meuse* produced 809,176 tons of metal in 1860 ; in 1908 the total tonnage was only 188,780. The failure of this supply has been a great drawback to the success of the Liége foundries and steel-works. Only 3 tons of zinc were produced in 1908, as against 48,857 in 1860 ; 195 tons of lead, as against 9980 ; and 357 tons of iron pyrites, as against 42,513. The number of workers employed in these mines fell from 11,141 in 1860 to 855 in 1908. Belgian iron-works have to rely mainly on the iron-mines of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the Vosges, which have come into existence since 1860.

For many years the Belgians have shown great activity in the quarrying of stone for building purposes. The principal Belgian quarries are to be found in the Ardennes (Luxembourg), the Condroz district of the Meuse Valley, *Entre-Sambre-et-Meuse*, and in parts of Hainaut. The number of quarries rose from 1412 in 1860 to 1680 in 1908, the number of their workmen from 17,105 to 36,877, and the value of their output from 17,393,574 francs to 62,874,600 francs. The products are limestone, granite, marble, and red sandstone. The Amblève Valley

is famous for its red sandstone, and perhaps the best-known marble quarry is that of St. Rémy, about a mile to the north of Rochefort. This quarry, which before the French Revolution belonged to the famous Abbey of St. Rémy, is now owned and worked by a private company. It produces a beautiful red marble, rich in colour and finely grained, which has been largely used in Belgian churches.

In 1908 the total Belgian exports of all stones worked in their quarries amounted to 40,636,000 francs.

The iron industry is of great antiquity. In the thirteenth century there was a numerous colony of blacksmiths at Liége, occupying their own quarter of the town. Iron in plenty was obtained from the forested lands of Franchémont, and small metallurgic works, extended along the Hoegne and other water-courses, produced iron goods of various descriptions for the markets of Liége, Maestricht, or Aix-la-Chapelle. But the systematic organisation of the industry had to wait till the nineteenth century, when it received its first great impulse from John Cockerill, an English emigrant. Cockerill obtained the favour and generous support of King William of Holland, who, in 1817, gave him the chateau of Seraing, with full powers to instal new workshops therein. A few years saw machinery being produced here which was equal to that of England, where alone hitherto the metallurgical art had attained some importance. In 1824 Cockerill set up a coke blast furnace which, together with powerful steam bellows, enormously increased the production. At Seraing were constructed some of the best engines for steamships of the period; and when railways were introduced into Belgium, Cockerill initiated the manufacture of locomotives and rails. To-day the industry of Seraing is composite and complex; coal-mining, blast furnaces, steel works, copper works, innumerable workshops for finishing and mounting—every department of modern metallurgy is represented here. It is a sort of exposition of the progress of the industry. The example of Seraing has been followed by the neighbouring towns,

and now Jemappe, Ougrée, Tilleur, and Sclessin abound with factories and furnaces. In Liége itself, the manufacture of arms is actively carried on ; it is estimated that there are over 40,000 gunsmiths working in the town and its suburbs. The universal practice was for the individual gunsmith to work in his own abode, and take his weapons to the gun-shop for sale ; but this system is gradually being superseded by the factory system. An enormous business is done in single-barrelled guns and rifles, which, whatever their quality, are probably the cheapest in the world.

The State owns a cannon foundry and one of the rifle factories at Liége. At Gembloux the State railways have established their engine and carriage works, employing several thousand hands.

Ghent is the best known of the other manufacturing centres. Since Belgium gained her independence, cotton and woollen factories have been a staple industry here, and the old industry of lace and embroidery, formerly carried on in the houses of the work-people themselves, has been revolutionised by the introduction of factories, and the application of capital and the appliances of modern science. Much more recent is the opening in Ghent of works for the construction of engines and agricultural implements.

Minor centres of manufacturing activity include Ath, on the Dendre, which is the centre of the manufacture of lime ; Renaix, where there is an important cloth industry ; Diest, famous for its breweries, and Malines and Grammont for their lace. Carpets are made at Tournai and Termonde ; at the latter there are also extensive oil works. Verviers, east of Liége, produces woollen goods and glass, but the glass trade, here as elsewhere in Belgium, has been seriously affected by German competition.

The average artisan's earnings are lower in Belgium than in England, but he makes his money go twice as far by means of thrift and the economical management of his home. Consequently, his condition of life is quite as high as in any other European country. Housing

conditions were, until recently, very bad, and insanitary slums are still common in the large manufacturing towns ; but this matter has been actively taken in hand, and great improvements have been effected. The worker is particularly well supplied with political associations and co-operative clubs, the latter enabling him to make the most of his income. The *Maison du Peuple* in Brussels and the *Vooruit* in Ghent are the two largest clubs. Membership of the former is secured by a monthly payment of three francs, and of the latter by a payment of one franc. For this the member is given medical attendance and an allowance of a franc a day during illness ; whilst at their stores everything is sold at the cost of production, plus five per cent. for administration expenses. One should add that under the State Pension Act of 1900, every working man in need, and over sixty-five years of age, is entitled to an annual pension of sixty-five francs.

Altogether there are about 400 societies of the same character as those just mentioned, distributed throughout the Belgian towns. The membership, however, of these is small ; it is computed that the *Maison du Peuple* and *Vooruit* absorb more than a third of the total. Most of the societies have saving- and sick-fund branches, and the workman's savings are practically doubled by provisions made by the State and the province, and by a voluntary grant from the society itself. For political agitation, he has the "Parti Ouvrier," which is thoroughly well organised throughout the country.

## THE ARTS

On the walls of the Hospital of the Byloque at Ghent there are some frescoes by an unknown Flemish artist of the thirteenth century. Their outlines are stiff and heavy, their colouring crude, and their drawing inexpressive ; but they serve to prove that fresco painting was alive in Flanders at a very early date, and that it was at least as advanced as the Byzantine art that was

still holding Italy in thrall. The art of painting was indigenous in Flanders ; the prosperous, if tumultuous, citizens of Ghent and Bruges, and the princes of State and Church, alike had need of it for the expression of their own life and their religious ideas. In due course it blossomed, at first under the direct patronage of the Dukes of Burgundy and the Archbishops, later as an outcome of growing civic and religious needs. The course of its development was on parallel lines to that of Italy. Dedicated at first entirely to the service of the Church, it gradually won its way to the representation of myth and fable, and thence to portraiture and landscape and all the subjects known to secular painting. The stiff early frescoes were succeeded by more naturalistic treatment, and the painted picture followed on the heels of the decorated wall. The obscure craftsman, working for his daily bread, unbefriended and alone, became the member of the medieval guild, and thereby one of a powerful corporation pledged to uphold and further the art or industry to which it owed its existence.

In the latter half of the fourteenth century Flemish and Walloon artists were employed at the Court of Charles V. The earlier custom of anonymity had now disappeared, and we get the names of the most important of these artists : Jehan de Bruges, Hennequin of Liége, and André Beauneveu of Valenciennes. The first two were painters and illuminators ; Beauneveu was sculptor as well. Very few of their works survive, but the capabilities of Jehan de Bruges for pictorial composition on a large scale are shown in the tapestries of the Apocalypse which he designed for the Duke of Anjou, part of which are preserved in Angers Cathedral. Jehan, in short, was the accredited founder of the famous school of Bruges, which a century later found its bright particular star in Hans Memling, and for a while took the lead in the artistic life of the Netherlands.

A great efflorescence of national art, it has been pointed out, nearly always happens on the eve of that nation's downfall. In regard to the great Flemish towns, particularly Bruges and Antwerp, it will be

found that their artistic star shone brightest just prior to the decay of their political and commercial importance. The school of Bruges attained its climacteric under the Burgundian princes, Philip the Good and Charles the Bold ; by the end of the same century, the Zwyn had silted up, the trade of the city had been largely transferred to Antwerp, and the day of Bruges' prosperity was past. Similarly the early seventeenth century witnessed the culmination of Antwerp's art in Rubens ; and the Treaty of Westphalia, signed in 1648, closed the Scheldt and inaugurated the long period of decay. In both cases the greatest artist of the school, Memling of Bruges, Rubens of Antwerp, lived on the very threshold of the coming disaster.

Memling has just been called the greatest artist of the Bruges school. Some writers, however, persist in giving that title to John van Eyck, on the grounds that this great artist was painter and valet-de-chambre at the Court of Philip the Good. But John van Eyck was not born at Bruges, but at Maeseyck ; he was also for a while in the service of John the Merciless, Bishop of Liége ; Ghent, too, has no little claim upon his name. In any case the attempts to label him with a narrowly local designation, merely for the sake of giving lustre and a distinctive touch to a particular local school, are hardly worth the trouble of making. Certainly, in the matter of characteristics, it requires a super-refined criticism to distinguish between the medieval schools of Bruges and Ghent. The excessive subdivision of schools within the borders of a single State is a habit derived from the example of medieval Italy, where, however, the characteristic differences between the art of Florence and Venice, Milan and Rome, existed and were easily decipherable. In medieval Flanders these differences are very much less perceptible. When one speaks of a Flemish artist belonging to this or that school, one simply means that he was born, or resided, at a particular town—nothing more.

John van Eyck, together with his brother Hubert,

sums up the best and most characteristic traits of Flemish painting during their epoch and for some time afterwards. We said, at the outset, that Flemish painting was indigenous. It remained so, a growth racy of the people, their social ideals, their religion, a reflection of their life and character. John van Eyck, the protégé of bishops and princes, was nevertheless an artist of the people. His art has all their peaceful qualities—naïve sincerity, a simple religious faith poised half-way between a symbolical and a wholly naturalistic conception of God and the universe; a distinct taste for the splendid and sumptuous in life, as a set-off to the austerity of their religious ideals. Van Eyck's masterpiece, "The Mystic Lamb," the dismembered portions of which were until the war of 1914 divided between Ghent, Brussels, and Berlin, expresses all these qualities: the rudeness and tenderness, the spirituality and the material coarseness of the age and the race. It is undeniable that the central panel of this work is one of the few primitive paintings in the world that are genuinely uplifting, that really seem, as Fra Angelico's pictures seem, to have been painted to the glory of Christ. It is equally true that only the exquisite craftsmanship of their painting saves the two side panels, the Adam and Eve of the Brussels Gallery, from a charge of over-naturalism, even of grossness.

With the Van Eycks is associated the most important improvement in the technical process of painting that was made in the Middle Ages. The precise nature of the oil medium employed by these artists is still in doubt; but it is supposed to have been an oil varnish which, when mixed with the grounded colours, produced a hitherto unknown depth and brilliancy of colour, together with a glossy surface that needed no further varnish. The old tempera picture always required varnishing. It is further supposed to have contained ingredients that caused it to dry in the shade as well as in the sun. But that it was not a "quick dryer" in the modern sense is evident from the nature of the painting for which it was employed. Work so finely

and intricately detailed as the Van Eycks' can only have been done slowly, stage by stage, and a quick-drying vehicle would have been utterly unsuitable. Some doubt has been cast on the novelty of the invention, on the grounds that an oil varnish was used, if not in Flanders, in England and elsewhere, either mixed with colours or subsequently applied, long before the Van Eycks' time. Horace Walpole, in his *Anecdotes of Painting*, refers to this, and questions whether the Van Eycks did not invent some previous painter's invention. Whatever may be the truth, the "new method" did not revolutionise painting then and there, whatever the interest taken in the process by contemporary artists. It was indeed nearly a century after the Van Eycks' deaths before "oil-painting" became anything like a universal practice.

Thierry Bouts and Roger van der Weyden, both of the first half of the fifteenth century, are the artistic children of the Van Eycks, and the staunch upholders of their tradition. Their works are pregnant with the same, as yet unsoiled, sentiment; bright, clear colour laid on with consummate craftsmanship is their distinctively Flemish characteristic. If theirs was the tradition of the Van Eycks, one must not forget that it was also the tradition of the guilds. The painters' guilds in Flanders came into existence at the same time as those in Italy; and their system developed, one might hazard, on yet more thoroughly conscientious lines. A man, under the guild system, had to be a craftsman before he could aspire to be an artist, and a servant before he was a master; and in the shadow of the guilds, and with the beneficent and regular encouragement of princes and prelates and nobles, a great national art of painting was evolved. Some time in the 'sixties of the fifteenth century Hans Memling came to Bruges from Brussels. It is not certain where he was born, or where he received his training. He was not enrolled in the Bruges guild, nor, so far as is known, in any other guild. But that at this time he was regarded as a master painter is fairly evident from the fact that he was in

the employ of Charles the Bold. Vasari mentions him as a pupil of Roger van der Weyden.

Memling is the most spiritual painter produced by the Netherlands. The devotional flavour of the art of Roger van der Weyden is reproduced in his pupil's work with an added tenderness ; in feeling he is nearer to the great Italians than to his fellow-countrymen. His paintings are best studied at the Hospital of St. John at Bruges. Here is the famous reliquary of St. Ursula, an oblong shrine of oak, with slanting roof and gabled ends, the angle buttresses adorned with statuettes of saints, coloured in gilt, the sides, roofs, and ends covered by a series of miniatures representing the life-story of the saint. Hardly ever have true art and handicraft been more perfectly combined. To Memling succeeded Quentin Matsys, perhaps the last of the great Flemish primitives. Living till 1530, he occupies a midway position between these and the school of Bernard van Orley ; his painting has the perfection of finish and fine fresh colour of the Van Eyck school, but the contrasts show more daring—a striving after an Italian richness of decorative effect—and the Flemish physiognomy of his figures is modified and softened. He is excellently represented both at Brussels and Antwerp. Bernard van Orley marks the beginning of the decline. Extraordinarily accomplished as this artist is, one finds clear evidence in his works of the artificial stimulus supplied by the examples of Florence and Rome. The "Italian" fashion had begun. It was to spread like a pall over the whole realm of Flemish art, and to stifle that art until Rubens brought deliverance from bondage. Artists were to seek their training, no longer at Antwerp or Brussels, but at Rome. The old, direct, and simple problems of Flemish painting were to give place to the new and complicated ones that were engaging Leonardo and Raphael.

Flemish art in the sixteenth century derived no profit from the Italian connection ; it only lost a good deal of its native force and character. The French have a genius for assimilating what comes to them from other

countries, of transforming and reproducing it with their own national individuality stamped upon it like a patent mark. They took the art of the Italian Renaissance at its full tide, used it discreetly and cautiously for the development of their own painting, and applying it to architecture, created in the French Renaissance a style that was to act as a model for the world's building. The Flemings have not this genius. Their attempt to impress Italian principles on their painting merely resulted in a dull, laboured, and obviously imitative fashion, without vitality or the hope of vitality.

Van Orley, Mabuse, Henri de Bles, Frans Floris were followed by the elder and younger Pourbus as the accredited masters of this period. One need not linger over them. They worked in very troubled times, and perhaps this fact is some sort of palliative for the deadness of their art. The Inquisition had ceased to plague the land when Rubens arrived ; there was hope in the national heart, and signs of improvement in the national prosperity. Rubens was the only Flemish painter who turned the Italian influence wholly to his own advantage, and to that of posterity. He passed some time in Italy ; then, with a well-stored mind, returned to his native Antwerp to paint, not Italian pictures, but genuinely Flemish ones. Diplomatist and man of affairs, he was never out of touch with the world or the Courts of his time ; a business man, he "ran" his art on business principles, with a huge workshop, with an army of assistants, with a most careful method of calculating values and keeping accounts. As a man, Rubens is the typical Fleming of his day ; his tradesman's instinct, his love of sumptuous display, his appetite for the fun of life, his homely piety, are all characteristic of the race. As an artist he gives the fullest possible expression to these qualities.

After Rubens comes Van Dyck, the favourite and the best of his pupils, and a little later Jacob Jordaens. But Flemish painting was once more on the wane before the last of the trinity produced his masterpieces.

Political and religious troubles in the country prevented its revival. For practically 150 years it lay dead, or at least dormant.

Then, in 1815, came the French painter, Jacques Louis David, to Brussels, an exile from his native land. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that David founded the modern school of Belgian painting. He found the country almost denuded of first-class talent ; what there was had taken advantage of the French régime to emigrate to Paris. David had been a leader in his own country, and he had no difficulty in resuming this rôle when fate drove him to Brussels. In short, for a while he governed Belgian art with an iron hand ; imposed his severely classical style upon theirs ; and, alas, left the Belgians the same legacy that he left the French, a school of feeble imitators of himself. After a while, the same thing happened as in France : there was a revolt. Romanticism superseded classicism, and just as Eugene Delacroix and Paul Delaroche led the movement of 1830 in Paris, so in Belgium Baron Wappers and Nicasius De Keyser, both Paris-trained, strove successfully to shatter the classical ideal. The new art lent itself to the Belgian taste for show and splendour and the immortalisation of national heroes ; Wappers especially enjoyed an astounding popularity. However, towards the middle of the century other influences were at work. Romanticism gave place to realism ; not the poetic realism of the Barbizon landscape painters, but a crude, almost archaic particularity, more Germanic than Latin. Baron Hendrik Leys, of Antwerp (1815-1869), was the chief protagonist of this style. He was the author of the Salle Leys in the Antwerp Hôtel de Ville, of some twenty-four pictures and portraits in the Antwerp Gallery, and of half a dozen works at the Brussels Museum. He had great honour in his own country, and attracted many foreign students, English included, to Antwerp ; but one could mention at least half a dozen contemporary Belgian realists whose works, as seen at Brussels and Antwerp, surpass his in pictorial and dramatic interest. Such are Louis Gallait (1810-

1887), very well represented at Brussels by "La Reste de Tournai" and other works; Alexander Robert (1817-1891); Ferdinand de Braekeleer (1792-1883); Charles Verlat (1824-1890). Alfred Stevens, a very remarkable artist, with a more "finished" style than most, belongs to this period, as also Joseph Stephens, his brother, famous as a painter of dogs.

The impression given by the nineteenth-century pictures in the Belgian galleries is that of a galaxy of historical paintings, and little else. Latter-day artists include some good landscapists, such as Alfred de Knyff and Hippolyte Boulenger; but most of the modern landscape work is a rather pale reflection of the corresponding French school, modified by the psychological difference between the two races. In historical painting, on the other hand, the nineteenth-century Belgians display both strength and unity in their strength, and it is in this branch that one finds, more than elsewhere, the evidence of the survival of their great tradition. In the sister art of sculpture great names are few. But Constantin Meunier, who stands to his country in the same relationship as Millet to France, has modelled the life of the Flanders peasant and the miner of the Borinage with imperishable impressiveness.

The modern Belgian artist does not lack clubs or places of exhibition for his work. In Brussels alone there are the Société pour l'art, the Sillon, the XX, and the Labeur, as well as others less well known; to-day Brussels has ousted Antwerp as the chief art centre. But Antwerp still attracts everybody interested in the masters of old time, and at Ghent there is a triennial exhibition which is commonly of extraordinary merit. Periodical exhibitions are also held at Namur, Mons, Tournay, Liège, and elsewhere. Nor must one omit to mention that the historic Flemish love of decorative, as apart from pictorial art, is kept alive in Brussels by a museum of decorative and industrial art, under the direction of M. Eugene van Overloop. It is housed in the exhibition buildings, erected in 1880 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the Belgian kingdom,

and contains a fine collection of furniture, tapestry, and ancient treasures of many kinds, and a prehistoric section that has recently been brought to a high stage of perfection.

### MUSIC AND DRAMA

The Belgians are a musical race, and though the country has produced no composers of the same rank as Beethoven or Wagner, or of the great French masters, the volume of its musical talent and achievement is considerable. The art received encouragement in Belgium at a time when her other arts were being more or less neglected. It was in 1832 that the old music school at Brussels was transformed into the Royal Conservatoire, under the direction of a scholarly musician, François Fétis. About the same time the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie began to take a leading place among the world's opera houses. Many compositions, now famous, were given for the first time at this theatre, and to-day there are few new works of real talent that do not at some time find a place in its programme. With the musical renaissance of the first half of the nineteenth century are associated the famous names of César Franck, Peter Benoit, and F. A. Gevaert.

At Ghent and Liège conservatoires existed at the time of the Dutch occupation. Subsequently these were re-organised, and numerous schools of music sprang up in other important centres devoted to the furtherance of composition and choral singing.

But perhaps the most popular expression of the native genius for music is to be found in the itinerant bands which play in the parks and places of the town. These, as a rule, are admirable, as compared with the peripatetic musicians from Germany which once added to the horrors of our London streets.

There are several theatres in Brussels : the Théâtre Royal du Parc, the Théâtre des Galeries St. Hubert (where operas are sometimes performed), and the

Théâtre Flamand are the best known. French influence is visible in the general style of these houses, and the pieces performed at the Comédie Française or the Variétés in Paris frequently find their way to the Belgian capital. In Ghent and Antwerp there are French and Flemish theatres, and the presence of the *café chantant* in nearly every town reminds us once again of the kingdom's many borrowings from her great neighbour. The Belgian theatre, on the whole, is less individual than Belgian music.

## LITERATURE

Belgian literature is virtually a creation of the nineteenth century. Up to that time, the perpetual political troubles of the country had rendered sterile any literary development that might otherwise have taken place. The Middle Ages were barren of aught save a few Flemish ballads, since unearthed by the Flemish Text Society ; even the years of the French and Dutch occupations produced little except the pamphleteers.

But with the establishment of the new kingdom there came not a revival—for there was little or nothing to revive—but a sudden blossoming of Belgium's innate literary genius. The first impulse came from the Flemish side, in the trail of the political agitation called the Flemish movement. The Flemish literary movement was initiated and largely sustained by two men, Henri Conscience and the poet Ledeganck. Conscience was the more truly Flemish of the two. Ledeganck dreamed of the larger nationality that embraced the two races living side by side. Conscience was "out for" a purely Flemish propaganda for vindicating the power of the Flemish language to express the noblest thoughts of humanity. His romances, which have been compared with those of Scott, were very popular and undoubtedly did much to stimulate the Flemish spirit in Belgium. For a while the Flemish movement had matters its own way ; there was no counter-move-

ment from the Walloon side. The Walloons had, and seemingly were content to have, French literature for their sustenance, and the Walloon writers in French were mainly imitators of French models. Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that even in these early days their efforts were wholly unfruitful. If the Flemish writers were producing the romance and poetry of Belgium, the French-speaking population provided the scientists, the historians, and the political writers. They stood, in fact, for scholarship and logic, as against the imaginative and creative faculty. For this they were well endowed. The political turmoils of 1789, 1814, and 1830 had called forth, from Wallonia, the most virile and prolific of all pamphleteers. The latter were the literary fathers of the more leisured historians of the later period.

To this limited extent, however, there was a Walloon movement following—after an interval—the Flemish movement. But for some time it made no very great progress, although it produced several highly respectable scholars. The Flemish movement, again, having lost its early propagandist zeal, and being deprived of its leaders, showed a tendency to languish. But it retained its provocative attitude towards the rival movement, affected to believe the latter sterile, and by so doing helped not only to keep itself alive but to stimulate the opposition. The result was that a second Walloon movement, much more vigorous than the first, was initiated at Liége, with the poetry of Vrindt as a counterblast to the Flemish utterances of Ledeganck and Van Beers; while Brussels, similarly resenting Flemish arrogance, became the centre of what was destined to be a real national revival in French literature.

The Jeune Belgique school, which came into existence about 1884, has since been the mainspring of the Brussels movement. Its first leaders were Van Hasselt, a poet of the Victor Hugo school; Charles de Coster, a richly endowed interpreter of Flemish aspirations; and Octave Pirmez, a Walloon solitary and transcendentalist. But far greater interest attaches to the later names of Camille Lemonnier and Edmond Picard.

M. Lemonnier is considered by the world of literature to be one of the finest stylists in any language. His work shows two dissimilar but not necessarily conflicting traits : the taste for sensuous and even sensual picturing, for lyrical exaggeration ; and the love and understanding of gentle and familiar things. In such works as *Un Mâle*, or *L'Homme en Amour*, he does not shrink from bringing out the brutality and coarseness of a coarse and brutal society ; while nothing could exceed the poetic tenderness of *Le Vent dans les Moulins*, *Le Petit Homme de Dieu*, or *L'arche*. Walloon as he is, M. Lemonnier shows in *Les Contes flamands* how well he understands the Flemish spirit. M. Picard is both poet and playwright. As the former, perhaps, he shines rather as the accomplished craftsman than as the original thinker ; in the latter rôle he has produced a comedy-drama, *L'ambidextre Journaliste*, which has gained notoriety as a terribly biting satire on the press of his day. It has been objected to the play that the picture of the journalistic world that it represents is unfair to the press as a whole ; that in lashing the least worthy types of journalism, he is unjust to the rest. This may be true, but the fact remains that the unscrupulous journalist, swayed only by grossly material and selfish motives, is a very actual phenomenon in the press of every country, including Great Britain. Belgium certainly has not escaped his presence. The Belgian press exercises enormous pressure on public opinion, by virtue of the fact that the Belgian citizen, much occupied with his own material prosperity, has little time to read anything but newspapers. And like a large section of the press in England, the Belgian editor appeals to the passions rather than the intelligence of his readers. Thus the educative value of the press is small, and judging by the well-known Belgian neglect of their own first-class writers, deleterious. The Belgian authors who have gained a world-wide reputation were mostly discovered in Paris.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century there appeared two new literary leaders : Maurice Maeterlinck

and Emile Verhaeren. Maeterlinck was a student and a professor at Ghent University, and his first literary essays were in Flemish. The more elastic French tongue, however, soon claimed him ; concurrently he exchanged the wider world of Paris for the narrower one of the Flemish university town. Of all the Belgian authors of first rank he has taken the greatest hold on the British imagination. Poet, philosopher, and playwright, his *La Vie des Abeilles*, a fascinating medley of poetry and natural science, was received with as much acclamation here—if indeed not more—as in his native land. His play of medieval Italy, *Monna Vanna*, had the honour of evading the ban put upon it by our censor ; *The Blue Bird* is known, by reputation at any rate, by every child in London. There are two main phases to observe in M. Maeterlinck's literary progress. In the first he was philosophic, inclined to pessimism, and mystical ; more recently he has shed a great part of his mysticism, the play of action has largely supplanted the essay of ideas, his philosophy admits certain material certainties. M. Verhaeren's literary personality is much more tempestuous. Though he employs prose, he is first and last a poet—a poet, especially, of the dunes and fields of Flanders. He, too, found Flemish too confined for the expression of his genius, and his works are written in French. *Les Aubes* was his first stage play. It was followed by *Le Cloître*, which shows his dramatic power to greater advantage, and by the less satisfactory *Philippe II*. But his most characteristic work is in another medium. *Les Villes tentaculaires* expresses his tormented revolt against the desolation and suffering of life in the great industrial cities ; *Les Débacles*, *Les Flambeaux noirs*, *Les Campagnes hallucinées*, are other poems in the same black vein of pessimism. But in *Les Heures claires* he seems to enter a veritable haven of rest, and the *Visages de la Vie* is widely and quietly contemplative.

Verhaeren and Maeterlinck, two essentially Flemish writers constrained to write in French, are rather apart from the principal groups in modern Belgian literature.

Thus Parnassian and classical poetry is faithfully defended by Iwan Gilkin, Albert Giraud, Fernand Severin, and Valère Gille. The poems of at least the first three of these are tinged with the weariness and pessimism associated with the school of Baudelaire, whose influence perhaps is the greatest of all in latter-day Belgian poetry. The French naturalistic school has its many disciples in Belgian ; for some time M. Lemonnier belonged thereto ; and the rival "symbolic" school has its adherents. Among the novelists are M. Delattre, who depicts the sunny mirth and dread sorrow of the Walloon villager ; M. Hubert Krains is a realist in similar themes ; MM. Leopold Courouble and Van Keymeulen are apologists of the middle classes, the former bringing a quick observation and delicate irony to the task. Then there are the essayists and literary historians, among whom may be included M. Picard and the Viscount de Speelbergh de Lovenjoul. The latter is famous for his *Histoires des œuvres de H. de Balzac et de Th. Gautier*, for the *Saint-Beuve inconnu*, and numerous other critical and bibliographical works. In general history, M. Pirenne occurs to the mind as the brilliant author of a recent history of Belgium, while M. Theodore Juste and M. Nameche are older workers of distinction in the same field.

The Belgian press is sufficiently active. Brussels possesses excellent daily papers in *L'Indépendance Belge*, *La Métropole*, the *Journal de Bruxelles*, and the *Etoile Belge*. The first two are, at the moment of writing, being published in London. The periodical press is almost entirely dependent for the number and character of its publications on passing events or movements. Thus, when the Congo was being revealed, in its most wonderful aspects, to the public, a number of Congolese publications sprang into existence. A great many of these have since disappeared. *The Historical and Archæological Journal of the Royal Society of Belgium* is probably the most permanent of the more serious publications.

## APPENDIX

## THE CONGO

There has not yet been time for fair-minded persons to decide whether the Belgians make good colonisers, or the reverse. It is only since 1908 that the Belgian Congo, their one experiment in this direction, has become a colony of the Belgian Government ; for the previous twenty-three years it was the personal preserve of King Leopold II. Everybody remembers the storm of indignation aroused in this country when the tale of the shocking abuses of his régime began to come to light, and the refusal of Great Britain and America to recognise the new State, after its transfer to the Belgian Government, until they were satisfied that the much-needed reforms were being carried out. Leopold, through his agents, undoubtedly exploited the hapless Congolese with a cynical barbarity worthy of a medieval tyrant. It is not yet time to try and appraise the cautious efforts of King Albert's Government to administer the country on different lines.

When all is said, the Belgians owe the possession of the Congo to Leopold alone. In 1875 they were without a colony of any sort. In that year, thanks to Leopold's initiative, an International Congress was called in Brussels, with the ostensible purpose of discussing the question of slavery in the heart of Africa, and devising means of repressing it by means of concerted penetration. We are not concerned here with the measures taken by France and Germany to effect this object ; it suffices that they fell very far short, in scope and daring, of those undertaken by Leopold. His first step was to secure and retain the services of H. M. Stanley, the British explorer. Stanley succeeded in creating a chain of stations across the Congo Valley, and Leopold, having thus established a foothold, proceeded to make treaties with the native chiefs, by which they ceded their sovereign rights to him. From this it was but a short step

to the imposition of forced labour on the wretched natives. When the African Conference met again at Berlin in 1885, the acquisition of the Belgian Congo by Leopold was an accomplished fact. The only question before that Conference was whether he should be permitted to retain it, and if not, who was to turn him out.

Inevitably, the matter was allowed to lapse. Leopold behaved with every appearance of fairness. He offered to hand over the entire territory to the Belgian State ; the latter's answer was to decline the gift, and to confirm their monarch's independent position as sovereign of the Congo Free State. The fact is that the country was afraid of the responsibility. The idea of a colony was new to them, and the prospect of emigration thereto extremely distasteful to the Flemish at any rate, with their strong instinct for home life. Doubtless, too, they were alarmed by the extent of the territory which Leopold, by means of adroit diplomatic manoeuvring, had increased far beyond its original delimitations.

By 1908 the Belgians had changed their views, and were as eager to take over the colony as they had previously been reluctant to do so. For one thing, a good deal of their money had been sunk in the country in the shape of grants-in-aid. Secondly, the Congo had afforded evidence of its resources in minerals, rubber, and other products. But the chief factor in determining this change of attitude was the scandal that had been aroused in Europe by the ill-treatment of the Congolese. Belgian public opinion was forced by outside criticism to concern itself with the matter. Leopold, on the contrary, was now reluctant to part with his profitable preserve. He had already, in 1889, bequeathed the Congo by will to the Belgian State ; he wished to retain its emoluments during his lifetime. But in 1890 the State had acquired the right of annexation under certain conditions in return for its financial assistance, and this right was enforced in a bill which became law in 1908. A year later Leopold died, and the Colonial Minister, with the active encouragement of King Albert, proceeded to effect the necessary reforms.

To begin with, the matter of finance was handled courageously—as indeed the case demanded. At the time of the transfer the Congo was a going concern, with a surplus of revenue over expenditure. But a great part of the revenue was drawn from concessionaire companies, and under the new conditions most of these had to disappear. The Budget of 1909 was transitional ; that of 1910 called for an abnormal expenditure, the ordinary expenditure being estimated at 40,370,814 francs, and the extraordinary at 33,516,775. The latter was to be met by Treasury bonds running for a period of not more than five years. One of the items of the extraordinary expenditure in the 1909 budget had been an annuity of 50,000,000 francs to Leopold ; and this item reappeared the following year in favour of King Albert. The latter declined this offer of personal benefit, and caused the first annuity to be treated as the nucleus of a pension fund for men who had served on the Congo, while the second was appropriated for the purchase of steamers. In 1911 and 1912 the excess of expenditure over revenue was even greater, and in the latter year the public debt amounted to £10,475,000.

Other matters had to be adjusted. As the price of her recognition of the Congo as an independent State, France had secured the right of pre-emption, should Belgium desire to part with her possession. This arrangement was modified by a Franco-German Agreement in 1911, whereby it was decided that in event of territorial changes in the Congo Basin, the signatories to the Berlin Act of 1885 should meet to discuss the situation. Internal reforms were gradually carried out. A royal decree, restoring to the natives the right—filched from them by Leopold—of collecting and disposing, by sale, of the natural products of the soil became operative throughout the whole country. The native tax in rubber was abolished, and a money tax substituted ; the natives were paid for their labour in money instead of, as previously, in kind. The authority of the tribal chiefs was partially restored. In the administration, higher salaries were offered with a view to securing a

better class of officials ; volunteers for the service are now carefully selected and trained. It is only fair to Leopold's memory to recall that it was during his lifetime, and mainly owing to his personal initiative, that the School of Tropical Medicine and the Colonial College were founded in Brussels, and the Colonial Museum at Tervueren ; with the result that the European death-rate in the Congo fell from 7·9 in 1901 to 4·60 in 1908.

The greater part of the Belgian Congo is sub-tropical, but Katanga and the southern provinces generally have a climate comparable to that of Rhodesia. The principal products are gold and copper, rubber, copal, palm nuts and oil, cocoa and ivory, and most of the trade is done with Antwerp, where the Congo flotilla is a feature of the port. The British firm of Lever Brothers have a concession of 20,000,000 acres in the Lower Congo, where they have established a palm oil industry and soap manufactory. For some time after the transfer the white population increased only very slightly, largely owing to ill-informed ideas about the climate, and to the dread of "sleeping sickness." However, the founding of Elizabethville in 1910 as the capital of Katanga gave a great impetus to this province, and between 1911 and 1912 its white population nearly trebled itself. There are now over 2000 whites in this province, as against 750 in 1911. Katanga is one of the richest copper regions in the world.

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# INDEX

AGRICULTURE, 66 *et seq.*

Albert, King, 35

Antwerp, 27, 38, 41, 42–46

Army, the, 35

Arts in Belgium, 75

Austrian rule, 30

BELFREY towers, 37

Bruges, 23, 36, 37, 38, 46–48

Brussels, 38–41

CATHOLIC party, the, 10, 14, 17,  
19, 20, 33

Charleroi, 58

Climate, 8

Clubs, co-operative, 75

Coal-mining industry, 70

Cockerill, John, 73

Communal government, 16, 18

Congo, the, 30, 90–93

Constitution, the Belgian, 13,  
18

Country, the, 63

Courtrai, 60

DRAMA, 84

Dutch rule, 30

EDUCATION, 19

Electoral system, 15, 34

FLANDERS, 6

Flemings, the, 8 *et seq.*, 12, 65;  
revival movement, 85, 86

Franco-German war, 34

French occupation, 30

Friendly societies, 75

GEOGRAPHICAL position, 5

Ghent, 24, 36, 37, 38, 48–52, 74

Government, 13 *et seq.*, 18

HEYST, 63

History, summary of, 22 *et seq.*

INDUSTRIES, 70 *et seq.*

Iron industry, 72, 73

KING, prerogatives of, 18

Knocke, 63

LANGUAGE, 11–13

Law, 18, 19

Leopold I, 13, 15, 33, 34

Leopold II, 34, 63, 90

Liberal party, 14, 20, 33

Liège, 53–55

Literature, 85–89

Louvain, 60

MALINES, 60, 61

Manufactures, 70 *et seq.*

Mariakirke, 63

Market-gardening, 67

Meuse, the, 7

Middelkirke, 63

Mineral resources, 72

Mining industry, 70

Mons, 56–57

Music, 84

NAMUR, 57

Neutrality Treaty, 34, 35

OSTEND, 63

## INDEX

PAINTING, 75 *et seq.*  
 Peasantry, 65  
 Plantin's Museum, 45  
 Political parties, 14–15  
 Press, the, 87, 89  
 Provincial government, 16, 18

RACIAL divisions, 8 *et seq.*  
 Railways, 64  
 Religion, 10, 17  
 Revolution of 1830, 10, 11, 22, 31  
 Roads, 64  
 Rural life, 63 *et seq.*

SCHELDT, the, 6, 7, 8, 42, 43  
 Schools, 20, 21  
 Sea-coast, 6  
 Small holdings, 64  
 Socialist party, 15, 33, 34, 72  
 Spanish wars, the, 28  
 Stone quarrying, 72

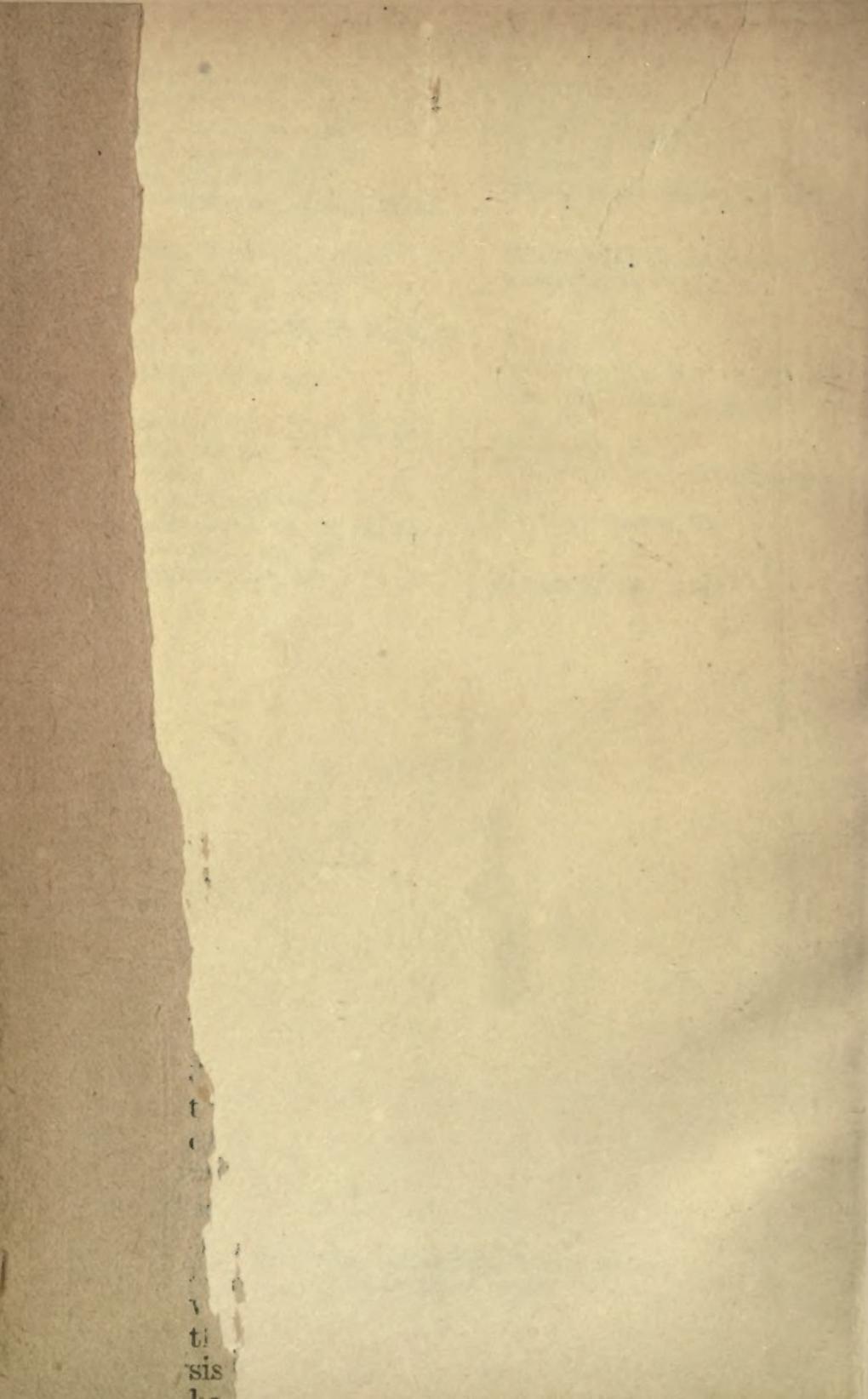
TONGRES, 59  
 Tournai, 58  
 Towns, the, 37  
 Trade, 70  
 Treaty of Neutrality, 34, 35

UNION with Netherlands, 30  
 Universities, 21

WAGES, 74  
 Walloons, the, 8 *et seq.*, 65, 86  
 War, the Great, Belgium's part in, 35  
 Westende, 63  
 William I, King of Netherlands, 30  
 Working-classes, 74

YPRES, 25, 36, 52–53





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